

7- year Review of EIT Food
Final Report
April 2024

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1.3 List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name/term
AIG	Action and Impact Groups
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLC(s)	Co-location Centre(s)
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EU	European Union
FS	Financial Sustainability
GA(s)	Grant Agreement(s)
GB	Governing Board
GGP	Good Governance Principles
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IP	Intellectual property
IP Board	Intellectual Property Board
KAVA(s)	KIC Added Value Activity/-ies
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KPI(s)	Key Performance Indicators
KT	Knowledge Triangle
KTI	Knowledge Triangle Integration
LE	Legal Entity
MB	Management Board
MT	Management Team
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisation(s)
PA(s)	Partnership Agreements
SIA	Strategic Innovation Agenda
SME(s)	Small and medium enterprises
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategies
ROI	Return on Investment

Abbreviation	Full name/term
RIS	Regional Innovation Scheme
SA	Strategic Agenda
SB	Supervisory Board
TRL	Technology Readiness Level

2. Introduction

This report covers the findings of the 7-year¹ review of EIT Food Knowledge and Innovation Community (hereinafter “KIC” or “EIT Food”) conducted by Deloitte. The report is organised into chapters representing the evaluation criteria, as follows:

- Relevance to the EU global challenges;
- EU added value and relevance with regard to the objectives of the EIT;
- Achievement of KIC’s own objectives;
- Efforts to coordinate KIC’s activities with other relevant research and innovation initiatives;
- Capacity to ensure openness to new members;
- Achievements in attracting new members from across the EU;
- Compliance with good governance principles;
- Efforts and results in designing and implementing gender-sensitive measures and activities;
- Capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems and the achieved level of financial sustainability (FS).

In each chapter the relevant indicators are assessed, and recommendations are made. The report concludes with separate chapters featuring recommendations based on the findings of the assessment and a justification for the overall scoring of the KIC. An overview of the methodology and data sources is provided in **Error! Reference source not found..**

European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is the EU flagship for innovation, using collaborative partnerships and cutting-edge research to find solutions to pressing global challenges. Established in 2008 as a driver of European innovation², EIT is an Agency of the European Union (EU) based in Budapest, Hungary. Since 2014, the EIT has been an integral part of Horizon 2020 and is now part of Horizon Europe’s Pillar III “Innovative Europe”. Over the years, it has become Europe’s largest innovation ecosystem and the European innovation flagship, gathering over 2,900 partners³, including research centres, universities, and businesses specialized in innovation and technology. The EIT was created to strengthen the EU’s innovation capabilities and increase EU’s competitiveness and sustainable economic growth by fostering and enhancing cooperation among entrepreneurs, academia, and research institutes. The EIT will also contribute to achieving the four key Strategic Orientations outlined in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan⁴.

As explained in its Strategic Innovation Agenda⁵ (SIA), the EIT represents the embodiment of the knowledge triangle that brings together education, research, and innovation hubs in several long-term priority fields such as sustainable energy, digitalization, urban mobility, and climate change⁶. To do so, the EIT supports the development of dynamic, long-term, cross-border and public-private partnerships among businesses (industry and SMEs), research centres and universities to address and devise solutions to pressing global challenges. These partnerships are called Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

The KICs are dynamic pan-European partnerships that develop innovative products and services and launch them on the market, create the environment for the establishment of innovation companies, and train a new generation of entrepreneurs and allow them to thrive. Each of the EIT Knowledge and

¹ From 2017 till 2023.

² [Regulation - 294/2008 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [Our community - EIT Food](#)

⁴ [Horizon Europe - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing Decision No 1312/2013/EU

⁶ [Decision No 1312/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\): the contribution of the EIT to a more innovative EuropeText with EEA relevance \(europa.eu\)](#)

Innovation Communities operates through innovation hubs, called Co-location Centres, spread across the continent to increase the impact and reach of the EIT's activities. Currently, there are 64 Co-location Centres in Europe. Since 2008, EIT's KICs have contributed to the creation of over 13,000 jobs and nearly 1,500 products and services and have supported more than 3,800 start-ups⁷.

EIT Food

Our assessment focuses on EIT Food. The EIT Food was established in 2017 notably to accelerate the transformation of food production, distribution, and consumption. Its main goals include building a future-fit, healthy, and sustainable food system in which Europe is the leading engine for food innovation fostering the EU's competitiveness. The extensive network brings together strategic sectors, including more than 100 expert partners; business entrepreneurs, academic researchers, and students to stimulate innovative agri-food solutions. The KIC has adopted a theory of change in the name of 'creating consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition' and is aiming to 'educate to engage, innovate and advance'.

As a result, the KIC became the world's largest food innovation community⁸, making significant contributions to Europe's food system. It has invested in business creation initiatives, incubated over 350 agri-food companies, while generating over 2,000 media citations annually by raising awareness of food system transformation. Moreover, EIT Food supported more than 60,000 participants in its educational programs. Since COVID-19 disrupted the food system, the rapid systemic response to major food challenges, such as food waste and obesity has been reinforced. Therefore, EIT Food invested over EUR 11 million to support the sector with targeted funds and reshaped the system to increase cross-sector collaboration and trust. Through its Farm to Fork Strategy, the KIC is working on an improved approach of a resilient food-system with efficient production and supply chains in all circumstances to achieve long-term positive change by shifting public attitudes towards sustainable and healthy nutrition accessible for everyone. In the name of encouraging collective action and inclusive innovation, the EIT Food identifies the following 6 focus objectives which it strives to achieve:

S01: Overcoming low consumer trust: EIT Food educates, inspires, and empowers European citizens to take on the role of catalysts for change. EIT Food actively gauges consumer trust levels across Europe and collaborates with EU Institutions in the shift towards fostering a food system that is not only healthy, but also intelligent, inclusive, cost-effective, and characterized by trustworthiness.

S02: Creating consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition: EIT Food is working to cultivate a stronger connection between individuals and their food, enabling them to comprehend it better and make well-informed decisions about their personal nutrition for enhanced health and overall well-being.

S03: Building a consumer-centric connected food system: EIT Food is in the process of creating user-friendly and pragmatic digital tools designed to assist individuals in making more informed and sustainable food choices. Simultaneously, within the industry, the technologies stemming from EIT Food programs will enhance product quality and processing methods. These advancements will facilitate transparency and the ability to audit safety, quality, and authenticity of food products, thereby curbing fraud, minimizing waste, and conserving valuable resources.

S04: Enhancing sustainability through resource stewardship: By facilitating knowledge exchange and fostering rapid progress, EIT Food's customized programs are introducing cutting-edge technologies aimed at diminishing food waste, reducing energy and water consumption, and averting the depletion of precious finite resources. These efforts yield significant advantages for farmers, producers, consumers, and the environment alike.

S05: Educating to engage, innovate and advance: EIT Food is actively crafting both open-access and personalized educational initiatives accessible to a wide spectrum of society, including students,

⁷ [eit_at_a_glance - factsheet.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁸ [About EIT Food - EIT Food](#)

professionals, emerging farmers, entrepreneurs, and lifelong learners. These programs are designed to furnish them with the most up-to-date insights into food production and consumption. The overarching goal is to bridge the skills gap and nurture a fresh generation of engaged citizens, trailblazers in the food realm, and innovative business entrepreneurs.

S06: Catalysing food entrepreneurship and innovation: EIT Food supports startups and consolidates resources to invest in the most promising enterprises and visionary concepts that hold the potential to shape the future of our food industry.

7-year review of the EIT Food

In accordance with requirements in the EIT Regulation and Strategic Innovation Agenda⁹, Article 12 of the Partnership Agreement¹⁰, and Articles 10 and 11 of the EIT Regulation¹¹, the EIT shall carry out a comprehensive assessment and review of the KIC's activities in line with the standards put forth by the Better Regulation Guidelines¹² and the criteria for European Partnerships set out in the Horizon Europe Regulation¹³. Based on the results of these assessments, the EIT Governing Board will decide to continue, modify, or discontinue financial contribution to the respective KICs or conclude the Memorandum of Cooperation with the respective KICs, with the consultation of the Member State Representative Group.

As the first seven-year Framework Partnership Agreements for EIT Food draws to a close, a mid-term review has been carried out to evaluate the achievements of the KIC in comparison to the commitments outlined in its proposal Strategic Agenda, Business Plans and reported in grant reports, and to compare the KIC's achievements against the market/public benchmarks/references.

With major societal challenges such as Covid-19, Russian invasion of Ukraine and Europe-wide inflation affecting areas of operation of the EIT Food, this review is an opportunity to assess the advancements made through the nine assessment criteria.

To provide a comprehensive 7-year review, the evaluation is based on the analysis of the following criteria:

1. **Relevance to the Union's global challenges;** this criterion relies on the importance of the European Union's objectives. The pivotal role of innovation, economic growth, green and sustainable Europe, and digital transition in the Union's political agenda suggests that all KICs' activities orbiting around relevant objectives shall be properly assessed against the societal challenges they were designated for.
2. **KIC's Union added value and relevance with regard to the objectives of the EIT;** as one of the main pillars of innovation in the European Union, the KICs have created added value through their actions towards promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and education. This criterion assesses whether the KICs have been aligned with the EIT objectives and whether their RIS activities have been aligned with the relevant Guidance Notes.
3. **Achievement of KIC's objectives;** all KICs are required to present a 7-year Strategic Agenda. This document serves as their *raison d'être* and it contains – inter alia – their strategic objectives, goals and expected results within these seven years. Assessing this criterion will help us understand whether the KICs have managed to address their objectives and goals and whether they have been successful in achieving the expected results, by analysing both societal, economic and mid-term impact KPIs.

⁹ Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021.

¹⁰ [EIT PA Jan 2021 updated version \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ Regulation (EU) No 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (recast), OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 61.

¹² [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1.

4. **KICs efforts to coordinate their activities with other relevant research and innovation initiatives;** as mentioned above, the KICs are one of the main pillars of innovation in the EU. As such, they create different collaborations with various relevant stakeholders in the EU. This criterion assesses whether the KICs have succeeded in pursuing such synergies and their volume.
5. **KIC's capacity to ensure openness to new members;** KICs' function requires constant evolution towards new partnerships. It is important that throughout their years of existence – especially those funded by the EIT – the KICs operate in an open, transparent, and inclusive manner that allows them to expand their members and achieve their objectives. This criterion evaluates whether the KICs' achieved partnerships within their years of operation have aided in achieving their goals and subsequently whether their activities have been open to new members, specifically representing the knowledge triangle players (innovation, research, education).
6. **KIC's achievements in attracting new members from across the Union;** as part of their evolution, KICs are required to create synergies with all the EU players and RIS eligible countries. These collaborations ensure that the KICs have achieved an adequate geographical representation of all key actors of the knowledge triangle. This criterion assesses the effectiveness of the eco-system that the KICs have built throughout the years and its volume, both in the EU but also in RIS eligible countries.
7. **KIC's compliance with good governance principles;** as part of the EU, the KICs are required to operate under good governance principles and ensure compliance with them. This criterion will evaluate whether the KICs are compliant with the relevant good governance principles, through the analysis of relevant EIT assessments.
8. **KIC's effort and results in designing and implementing gender-sensitive measures and activities;** KICs are also required to operate in a gender balanced environment, adjusted to society's challenges. Implementing gender sensitive measures is considered as one challenge that numerous organizations need to overcome and thus, this criterion assesses whether KICs have designed and implemented such measures.
9. **KIC's capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems and the achieved level of financial sustainability;** KICs are established to address innovation challenges. For this specific reason, they need to develop strong innovation eco-systems that will be a part of a wider innovation community. However, the financial sustainability of such eco-systems is also being assessed and this criterion will delve deeper into analysing the sustainability of the latter and whether the KICs have addressed the societal challenges they were established for.

When assessing the above criteria, scores (maximum 10 for each criterion)¹⁴ and pre-defined weighting were applied for each criterion, as shown below:

Table 1: 7-year review assessment scoreboard

0-10	Scores interpretation
0	The profile does not meet the criterion at all or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
1-2	Poor – serious weaknesses
3-4	Fair – goes some way to meeting the criterion, but with significant weaknesses
5-6	Good – but with several shortcomings
7-8	Very good – but with a small number of shortcomings
9-10	Excellent – meets criterion in every relevant respect. Any shortcomings are minor

Scores were awarded based on whether the detailed indicators under each criterion were met and the number and significance of shortcomings and weaknesses.

In order to assess performance of the KIC, desk research was conducted, supplemented by qualitative data obtained through interviews and targeted surveys, a detailed counterfactual analysis and

¹⁴ The maximum and threshold points for each criteria was predefined by EIT.

additional evaluation using methods such as theory-based impact evaluation, multicriteria analysis and network analysis. As part of the desk research, the following documents were reviewed:

- EIT regulations, guidance, and principles;
- KIC proposals, agreements, business plans, reports and action plans;
- Internal¹⁵ monitoring data and EIT recommendations;
- Other background data and materials shared by the KIC throughout the entire assessment period.

A qualitative, semi-structured interview was carried out with representatives of the KIC's management to complement, triangulate, and further clarify data collected through the desk research and surveys.

Finally, the findings obtained through various data collection instruments and evaluation indicators used for the assessment of the KIC's performance were triangulated in an assessment matrix to produce solid conclusions and recommendations.

¹⁵ Monitoring mechanisms in place within EIT e-g. Grant Assessments

3. Executive summary

The report covers the findings of the 7-year review of EIT Food conducted by Deloitte, according to the framework contract 21-3030-03/EIT. Under the contract, three first wave and one third wave KICs have been assessed, including EIT Food as third- wave KIC, using a single assessment methodology. This report covers the overall evaluation proceedings and findings related to EIT Food.

EIT Food was designated in 2017 by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The main goal of the KIC is to accelerate the transformation of food production, distribution, and consumption. Since its launch, EIT Food has become the world's largest food innovation community with over EUR 3 million investment in business creation programs and 350 supported companies, thereby making significant contributions to Europe's food system.

The assessment was carried out in line with the requirements set out in the Request for Service No.03 implementing document¹⁶, using the **following methodological tools**:

- Desk research;
- Surveys;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Multi-criteria analysis;
- Theory-based impact evaluation;
- Counterfactual impact evaluation;
- Survival analysis (Kaplan-Meier estimate);
- Triangulation, conclusions and recommendations.

During the assessment, the EIT Food's results and activities were assessed along the nine criteria set out by the EIT, however, the following areas were also taken into account and expanded upon as part of Section 7.2:

- KIC Governance, KIC Partnership;
- KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability;
- Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs;
- Education & Alumni;
- Innovation;
- Entrepreneurship & Business Creation;
- EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS);
- Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration;
- Communications, Dissemination & Outreach.

Summary of the Assessment Criteria

Table 2: Assessment summary

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
Relevance to the Union's global challenges	<p><u>The results of EIT Food's activities have contributed to addressing the societal challenge of agri-food sector. Overall, the organization's efforts are well adopted with Europe's commitments to food sustainability and health. In 2023, serious efforts were adopted to achieve full openness and to improve the KIC's funding system provided for start-ups, but challenges and weaknesses still exist in these areas.– Very Good – 7</u></p> <p>Assessment:</p> <p>1.1 The results of the KIC's activities have been relevant to the objectives of the Union, including boosting economic growth, strengthening the innovation capacity of the Member States, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship – <u>excellent – 10</u>: EIT Food has demonstrated relevance to the objectives of the European Union including boosting economic growth, strengthening the innovation capacity of the Member States, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. It had made a significant contribution to the SDGs and sustainable growth, supported startups and entrepreneurs and entered into collaboration with international partners, while focusing on building innovation capacity.</p> <p>1.2 The results of the KIC's activities have contributed significantly to addressing the societal challenge it was designated for – <u>good – 6</u>: EIT Food has taken substantial steps towards addressing the societal challenges it was designated to address. Supporting initiatives like EU Skills for the Future, Connecting Food, and Great Taste, Zero Waste represent promising development by engaging people and increasing transparency in the food supply chain aiming to improve the public health and global food systems in the long term. Alignment with EU priorities and a dedication to encourage research and innovation make EIT Food an essential player in addressing societal challenges as well. However, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the indicator, a more extensive, quantifiable analysis of outcomes and long-term impacts is needed as these were not measured efficiently by the KIC. At EIT Food, a specialist Impact Manager role has been filled in 2023 to perform Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning actions with three reports commissioned early 2024. Altogether, EIT Food's activities have contributed to a more sustainable and healthier food system that addresses the critical challenges faced by society.</p> <p>1.3 Societal impact KPIs of EIT Food – <u>good – 6</u>: Involvement of consumers directly in the dialogue regarding the future of food has the potential to enhance innovation, sustainability and resolve many of the food system's actual problems and challenges. The EIT's initiatives showed success in promoting societal dialogue between academical, industrial and civil society actors in connection with food security and sustainability. Deloitte can highlight various self-organized forums and summits like the Citizen Participation Forum, research based on surveys and focus groups, and the creation of communication platforms and channels established in order to foster collaboration and information exchange. Advances have been made against food waste and food loss; the Great Taste, Zero Waste and We Lead Food projects show strong overall performance. Besides the strengths, we can conclude that further efforts are needed to enhance the environmental sustainability of the agri-food system according to the results of the partner survey (June 2023) as a large part of the responding partners have limited or no impact</p>	7 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	1.5

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8 / 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>in the related initiatives. It is a positive sign that EIT Food in September 2023 launched a Societal Impact (“Missions-driven”) engagement approach for the community to commission better the knowledge triangle activity till the end of 2025.</p> <p>1.4 Economic impact KPIs EIT Food.– <u>very good - 7</u>: The KIC has shown substantial progress in its KPIs, indicating its strong focus and commitment to address agri-food related challenges. However, it’s impact on the revenue growth was not significant enough on most of the start-ups according to the survey results, which indicate the need for a revaluation of EIT Food’s support system provided to start-ups. Job creation and sustainability have been positively influenced by KIC engagement, though the extent varies. Notably, the KIC’s activities have demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in addressing skill gaps and shortages, particularly in entrepreneurship, innovation, technical expertise, sustainability, creativity, and leadership. Career trajectories of EIT-labelled education participants demonstrate diverse transitions, with trends indicating challenges and opportunities of graduates moving from internships to more advanced roles. Additionally, initiatives are making positive strides in various aspects, demonstrating its commitment to fostering sustainability, innovation, and economic growth in the food sector.</p>		
KIC’s EU added value and relevance with regard to the objectives of the EIT	<p><u>The results of the KIC’s activities are relevant to and aligned with the objectives of EIT and the European Union, including boosting economic growth, strengthening the innovation capacity of the Member States, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship demonstrating a commitment to fostering capacity within the Union. The KIC has created European added value with respect to building an innovation ecosystem, however, the KIC’s ability to address challenges faced by start-ups to generate revenue from innovation depends on further progress. - Very Good - 7</u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>2.1 The KIC has created a significant European added value with respect to building a sustainable innovation ecosystem through knowledge triangle integration, and as a result has developed concrete solutions to societal challenge it addresses as foreseen in the original proposal – <u>excellent - 9</u>: EIT Food, guided by its original proposal and strategic agenda, has effectively created a significant European added value by promoting the Knowledge Triangle Integration. The KIC has developed concrete solutions to societal challenges, particularly in the domain of food sustainability, by fostering collaboration and innovation across the academic, business, and research sectors. Its efforts align with European priorities, and its achievements reflect its commitment to transforming the European food system.</p> <p>2.2 All KIC’s activities have been fully aligned with and relevant to the EIT objectives as defined in EIT legislative framework – <u>very good – 7</u>: All EIT Food activities detailed in the annual and multiannual Business Plans are closely aligned with and relevant to the objectives set forth in the EIT legislative framework. However, the goals and results of the cross-KIC thematic innovation activity are not consistent in such fields like innovation and education as they face challenges in meeting certain KPIs. Despite these challenges, the KIC contributes significantly to regional empowerment, sustainability, and interdisciplinary collaboration.</p> <p>2.3. KIC RIS activities have been fully aligned with the EIT RIS Implementation Guidance note 2018-2020 and RIS Implementation Framework (2021-2027) – <u>very good – 8</u>: Based on Deloitte’s observations and the results</p>	7 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	1.5

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>summarized per KPIs, the KIC's RIS activities are closely aligned with the EIT RIS Framework 2022 and the Business Plans. It is important to note that the KIC is actively strengthening its network of RIS Hubs including 20 Hubs in 2023 exceeding the target set out in the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 and over 200 activities and events attracting more than 6,000 participants in 2022. The Hubs play an essential role in encouraging the connection with regional stakeholders, fostering knowledge exchange, and facilitating the successful execution of projects in alignment with EIT Food's strategic objectives, thereby driving innovation and impact in the food sector.</p> <p>2.4 Medium-term KPIs – <u>good - 6:</u> Overall, the KIC needs to show further progress in its Medium-term KPIs. Even though a great proportion of KIC label graduates are employed, most of the graduates who responded to the survey were reluctant establishing or joining a start-up. However, highly regulated food markets could be interpreted as a barrier for direct entry from academic programmes to start-ups for early career individuals. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the KIC supported start-ups who responded to the survey indicated that they failed to generate revenues from innovation. These findings indicate shortcoming in addressing the start-up challenges and in fostering a supportive ecosystem for innovation commercialization in the KIC's progress. As the time to consumer market income is slow due to highly regulated markets for food products, Venture Capital is filling that commercial development income gap instead of revenue as might be seen in less-regulated sectors.</p>		
Achievement of the KIC's objectives	<p><u>Despite of some shortcomings in its activities, the KIC is on track to achieve its 7-year Strategic Agenda and achieved results within the scope of its EIT RIS strategy. Challenges remain in fulfilling some KPIs and meeting certain targets especially regarding the number of marketed innovations and start-ups created, but the KIC's leadership and its dedication indicate a promising trajectory. - Very Good - 8</u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>3.1 A KIC has achieved/likely to achieve its 7-year Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) objectives and expected results in line with its initial strategic objectives. Any deviation from the Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) has been justified, approved by the EIT, and has led to maximizing impact – <u>very good - 7:</u> EIT Food has taken significant steps in fulfilling its 7-year Strategic Agenda (2021-2027). However, according to the key KPIs, a varied picture of achievements in the context of the KIC's education and innovation activities can be observed, which highlight the need for further actions in some areas. EIT Food successfully attracted students to its EIT-labelled MSc and PhD programmes and achieved a high participation rate in non-degree education and training initiatives, yet the absence of start-ups created by graduates of the EIT-labelled MSc/PhD programs and falling short of the target for the number of graduates from these programmes necessitate further focus. Furthermore, even though the innovation activity in 2021 and 2022 was positive, challenges in meeting certain targets, including reaching the required number of start-ups created by the graduates of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes and the start-ups created for/ or by innovation. On the other hand, the KIC was successful in achieving the KPIs related to the</p>	8/ 10 (Threshold: 6)	1.5

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>number of supported start-ups and scale-ups and the investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups. It can be concluded that the KIC's leadership and its dedication to solve these challenges show a promising trajectory. Overall, the KIC is on track to achieve its 7-year Strategic Agenda objectives regarding its entrepreneurship activities, however the KIC's education and innovation activities require further attention.</p> <p>3.2 The KIC has achieved its objectives and respective targets as stated in its original proposal and Strategic Agenda in relation to the societal challenge – <u>very good</u> – 8: The KIC has effectively pursued its strategic objectives, contributing to the societal challenges outlined in its key documents such as the original proposal and Strategic Agenda. In terms of supply efficiency, the KIC exceeded its objectives and with the involvement of 25 new digital solutions, successfully developed a consumer-centric connected food system. With the regard to solutions leading to the reduction in volume CO2, the EIT Food also overachieved its goals. Moreover, the KIC has nurtured innovation ecosystems, shifted towards impactful entrepreneurship, diversified funding sources, enhanced knowledge sharing, and fostered synergies with key partners. However, in connection with other purposes such as the intended number of the products on the market supported by EIT Food, the KIC has failed to meet the targets. Despite minor setbacks, the KIC continues the progress towards its ambitious targets, including sustainable innovation ecosystems, healthier nutrition, consumer-centric connected food system, sustainability through resource stewardship, education, synergies, and alignment.</p> <p>3.3 KPI targets including impact KPIs for up to 2024 defined in the KIC original proposal, Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) achieved/likely to be achieved – <u>very good</u> – 8: EIT Food has made significant progress in its journey toward reaching the KPI targets including innovation, business creation, education, and public engagement as outlined in its initial proposal and the Strategic Agenda for 2021-2027. Particularly commendable are its achievements in stimulating certain indicators, such as the EIT RIS Start-ups/scale-ups supported, Investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups, and the number of graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs d EIT RIS Participants with (non-degree) education and training. Although the EIT Food has encountered difficulties in meeting specific financial sustainability relevant KPIs (including FS revenues, the FS coefficient, and the co-funding rate), the KIC's overall direction is optimistic, however further effort is strongly recommended to stay in track. Through its continued endeavours, EIT Food is poised to fulfil its seven-year KPI objectives and make substantial contributions to its overarching mission.</p> <p>3.4 The KICs have delivered EIT RIS activities and achieved results within the scope of their EIT RIS Strategies. Any deviations are duly justified and having led to maximized results – <u>excellent</u> – 9: Based on the EIT Assessment of the KIC Interim Report 2021, the accomplishments within the EIT RIS portfolio align well with and make a meaningful contribution to the KIC strategic agenda. The integration of the knowledge triangle, encompassing education, research, and innovation, is appropriately represented within the portfolio. The overall performance of the EIT RIS portfolio was generally satisfactory as the majority of the KAVA indicators are on course with the Business Plan.</p>		

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8 / 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
KIC's efforts to coordinate its activities with other relevant research and innovation initiatives	<p><u>EIT Food has actively pursued and achieved concrete synergies and complementarities and effectively fostered synergies with diverse education, research, and innovation initiatives, both at regional, national and EU levels supporting health and sustainability in the food system. - Excellent - 9</u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>4.1 The KIC has achieved the concrete synergies and complementarities described in the original proposal and Strategic Agenda- <u>excellent – 9</u>: EIT Food has actively pursued and achieved concrete synergies and complementarities (including initiatives like Water Scarcity, various infrastructural projects and cooperations with ESIF and EIP-AGRI), as outlined in its original proposal and Strategic Agenda. The KIC's commitment to cross-KIC cooperation is evident through initiatives like Water Scarcity, indicating its dedication to multidisciplinary approaches. Collaborative engagement in EIT RIS and educational projects, such as Human Capital and Skills for the Future showcase its commitment to strengthen the food system holistically. The KIC has successfully cooperated with national and regional authorities, including several European Partnerships to develop synergies in the field of innovation, education, and entrepreneurship. The KIC's involvement in the European Innovation Council and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and collaboration with the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) further demonstrate its alignment with broader EU objectives. This collaborative and integrated approach underpins EIT Food success in achieving its goals and fostering innovation in the context of health and sustainability in the food system.</p> <p>4.2 Number of synergies with other relevant education, research, and innovation initiatives in the same area of the societal challenge at national, EU and global level - <u>excellent – 9</u>: The KIC has effectively fostered synergies with relevant education, research and innovation initiatives, both at the regional, national and EU levels. EIT Food has launched various programs involving hundreds of students and researchers, such as the EIT labelled Master in Food Systems programme, the Food Solution Programme and the Aggrotech Academy, to raise awareness on the most current food issues, encourage innovative ideas in the academic sphere and foster business transformation in the agrifood sector in Europe. Moreover, these strategic programmes, emphasizing innovation, skills, and leadership for the agrifood sector, have yielded substantial educational impact. The KIC's adaptability, global reach, and dedication to transformative partnerships showcase their commitment to addressing the transformation of the food system through collaborative and multidisciplinary efforts, which resulted in the establishment of over 40 education and training programs with more than 9800 farmers participating in various countries all over Europe including Portugal, the UK, Germany and so on.</p>	9 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	0.5
KIC's capacity to ensure	<u>EIT Food has made considerable strides in building a diverse partner community. The KIC has made significant efforts to make the calls more open and accessible resulting in clearer criteria for partners. The overall partnership composition appears</u>	8 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	0.5

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8 / 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
openness to new members	<p><u>comprehensive and aligned with the KIC's goals, but further improvement is needed in connection with size and composition.</u></p> <p>- Very Good - 8</p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>5.1 Partnership size, growth, composition and performance have been adequate for achieving the long-term objectives of the KIC Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) – <u>very good – 7:</u> The partnership size, growth, composition, and performance all hold substantial promise. While the growth in the number of partners is already significant, there is still potential for further expansion, with which statement the majority of the respondents of the survey agree (69%). On the other hand, the composition of the partnership is unbalanced, i.e., majority of partners are from Western European countries while there is still room for growth in the region of Eastern Europe. While the size and composition are assessed as good, these could benefit from further development. The strong growth and exemplary performance make them the primary strengths contributing to the attainment of the KIC's long-term objectives.</p> <p>5.2 KIC's Calls for activities have been fully open to new members – <u>very good – 8:</u> The KIC have made significant progress in transparency and accessibility, by its publication of calls for proposals on the EC Funding and Tenders, which ensures that all potential participants have equal access to the opportunities provided by the KIC. The member selection is on an upward trend, and there are commendable efforts in engaging new partners. Since 2021 serious effort has been taken to achieve full inclusivity and maximize engagement and solve the main problems in these areas such as the case of limited opportunities for external organizations to participate in projects. Even tough, full openness has been achieved, in the inspected period of 7 years the calls of the KIC has not been fully open. This may have led to a number of potential beneficiaries failing to receive support and if they would it could have improved the performance of the KIC.</p> <p>5.3 KIC has fully addressed the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on relevant GGP assessments related to openness to new members – <u>excellent – 9:</u> The KIC's governance structure is on a positive trajectory in addressing EIT Good Governance Principles in terms of openness to new members. It displays a strong commitment to inclusivity, knowledge triangle integration, and an evolving governance model that aligns with the KIC's objectives and strategies, making the operational transparency of the KIC generally excellent. Overall, the KIC's approach reflects substantial progress and an ongoing commitment to achieving the highest governance standards. However, always striving to follow and fulfil all recommendations in the 7-year period assessed in the report, there has been some discrepancies that the KIC had to deal with to fully address EIT GGP thus Deloitte slightly reduced the final score.</p> <p>5.4 Balanced representation of all key knowledge triangle players in the partnership – <u>very good – 8:</u> EIT Food's partnership saw significant improvements in 2022 after addressing imbalances identified in 2021. While business organizations maintain a strong presence, research and higher education institutions play essential roles. Survey responses reveal mixed</p>		

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8 / 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	perceptions regarding the imbalance between business and research organizations as these sectors are slightly underrepresented in the knowledge triangle. To optimize EIT Food's impact, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure balanced representation across all knowledge triangle players and foster a comprehensive innovation ecosystem, reflecting the need to counterbalance the business sector and to make the presence of consumer organizations in the partnership more prominent.		
KIC's achievements in attracting new members from across the Union	<p><u>Due to including new active partners and the presence of CLCs, the KIC achieved a strong and balanced representation of the KIC's partnership in EU Member States and RIS eligible countries. – Excellent- 9</u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>6.1 KIC has grown to an effective sustainable innovation eco-system with partners within and outside the EU, including RIS eligible countries and regions – <u>excellent – 9</u>: EIT Food's strategic approach, encompassing partnership growth, innovation, cross-collaboration, and initiatives focusing on the transparency of the food sector, has transformed its ecosystem. By actively seeking diverse partnerships within and outside the EU, addressing barriers like business secrecy of large food corporations and slow technological transformation of the sector, and nurturing innovation focus areas related to food waste and security, EIT Food is creating a sustainable innovation ecosystem. KIC's proactive involvement in cross-KIC activities and dedication to transparency further enrich the ecosystem. This approach has led to enhanced collaboration, innovative projects, and increased transparency, translating into long-term outcomes such as improved food security that could reach global level. In the long term, EIT Food's commitment to addressing societal challenges and food security contributes to a sustainable transformation of the food sector.</p> <p>6.2 Number of the EU Member States covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players – <u>excellent – 9</u>: There is a strong representation of the KIC's partnership in EU Member States, assuming a larger share each year between 2018 and 2022. The number of partners increased by almost four and a half times, reaching more than 248 in 24 member and 10 non-EU countries.</p> <p>6.3 Number of the RIS eligible countries and regions covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players in its activities – <u>very good – 8</u>: The number of partners from EIT RIS countries (140) is exceeding the KIC set targets (40). The target number of EIT RIS Hubs (16) was not achieved by 2022 even though it is nearing its target with 15. In 2023, the KIC has exceeded its yearly target of 17 with 20 RIS Hubs established.</p> <p>6.4 Balanced geographical presence of CLCs and EIT RIS Hubs in line with the strategic objectives and societal challenges – <u>excellent – 10</u>: The presence of CLCs is in line with the strategic objectives and reflect the KIC's balanced and complementary mix of industry, university, and research partners, which offers access to diverse and sizable markets. Regarding the geographical presence, there are EIT RIS Hubs in the CLC North-East and CLC South countries including lead</p>	9 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	1

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8 / 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>entities in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia including start-up support entities in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The KIC have coverage throughout the RIS eligible regions with 20 RIS Hubs, further to the two existing CLCs there a third RIS based CLC is planned to be established in 2024.</p> <p>6.5 Trend of new active partners over the period of the review – excellent – 9: The trend number of new active partners was rapidly increasing between 2019 and 2021 and there are still signs of potential increase. This means 267 new partners in the analysed period of 2019-2022. The most successful year was 2021, when a total of 60 partners have joined the partnership.</p>		
KIC's compliance with good governance principles	<p><u>The KIC fully addresses the EIT Good Governance Principles. Previously identified weaknesses regarding openness, governance alignment and the selection of the SB members were well resolved. Furthermore, great progress has been made in the field of the 3 strategic recommendations (SR) namely financial sustainability, innovation and control over CLCs. Very good – 7</u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>7.1 KIC fully addresses the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on the relevant GGP assessment– very good – 7: Based on our assessment, the KIC complies well with the EIT Good Governance Principles.. Operational transparency, the diversity of EIT Food's Management and the selection of the personnel on KIC LE and CLCs level were all well rated compliant. To highlight some of the strengths; clear and publicly accessible information regarding partnership, Strategic Agenda, financial data, annual report, results, success stories, and KPIs. The full list of the KIC's projects is also available on its website. The recruitment policy of the personnel on KIC LE and CLCs level includes non-discriminatory provisions and meets GDPR requirements. Gender and geographical diversity are also outstandingly implemented thanks to the KIC internal rules dedicated to gender equality and professional diversification.</p> <p>7.2 GB Strategic recommendations have been effectively addressed and fully implemented by the KIC– very good – 8: EIT Food has significantly enhanced its financial sustainability, innovation capabilities and control over CLC as great efforts were taken to adapt previous problems identified in the Interim Report 2021-22 assessment. Among its greatest achievements we can mention the removal of all the caps that limited the returns to the KIC from investments in successful innovations, strengthening its performance in the innovation area and accessing control over all CLCs by the end of 2024. However, there is still room for improvement in some shortcomings including the diversity of financial sources and the supporting students in creating and joining start-ups.</p>	7 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	1
KIC's efforts and results in designing and implementing	<p><u>There are efforts in designing and implementing gender-sensitive measures, which provides overall satisfaction of the survey responders with the results. However, it is recommended for the KIC to improve gender equality and diversity. Very Good – 8</u></p>	8 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	0.5

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
gender-sensitive measures and activities	<p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>8.1 KICs have designed and implemented gender sensitive measures and activities– <i>excellent – 9</i>: Overall, EIT Food has taken a comprehensive approach to address gender imbalances and promote gender equality and diversity in its activities and organization. They have set clear goals, implemented specific initiatives, monitored progress, and integrated gender and diversity considerations into their decision-making processes, which demonstrates a strong commitment to these principles.</p> <p>8.2 Positive expert’s assessment of the outputs and results delivered by these activities– <i>very good – 8</i>: While a formal expert assessment may be lacking, the data collected during desk research and partner feedback to the surveys clearly indicate that EIT Food's gender-sensitive measures and activities have yielded positive outcomes and results. These efforts have not only improved gender representation but have also contributed to a more inclusive and equitable environment within the organization and the wider food ecosystem, reflecting a commitment to promoting gender equality.</p>		
KIC’s capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems and the achieved level of financial sustainability	<p><u>EIT Food established an innovation ecosystem successfully addressing societal challenges, while significantly impacting the food system. EIT Food has achieved some encouraging results to ensure its long- term viability by sourcing a larger share of their funding from external sources thereby creating a more balanced model. However, there are lingering concerns of financial sustainability regarding value, documentation, and reconciliation in connection with audited financial statements. – <i>Very Good – 7</i></u></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>9.1 The KIC has created a sustainable innovation ecosystem effectively addressing the societal challenges and skill gaps it was established for– <i>very good – 8</i>: The KIC has performed well in many aspects, particularly in aligning with innovative ecosystem development, and overall financial sustainability. The KIC has performed particularly well in diversifying revenue sources and generating income from incubation and acceleration support. Its systematic approach to addressing societal challenges is commendable. However, areas such as financial sustainability, upper revenue limits, and underperformance in the education sector warrant attention to further enhance its effectiveness in achieving societal impact and sustainability. EIT Food's systematic approach in overcoming barriers, leveraging strategic inputs, generating valuable outputs, and achieving short and long-term outcomes has been instrumental in creating a sustainable innovation ecosystem. By actively addressing societal challenges, bridging skill gaps, and fostering transparency, the KIC has not only created an effective ecosystem but has also significantly impacted the food sector. Its adaptability, inclusivity, and resilience make it a dynamic force in shaping the future of the food industry.</p>	7 / 10 (Threshold: 6)	2

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>9.2 KIC has made evidenced progress against the following indicator (as per definition provided in the EIT Impact Framework): Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence– <u>excellent – 9</u>: Based on the information gathered, EIT Food has indeed made evidenced progress against the indicator of "Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence." The organization's strong partnerships, efforts to mobilize regional networks, establishment of innovation hubs, support for start-ups, and the positive feedback from partners all align with the objectives of fostering visible and impactful innovation ecosystems within the food sector. EIT Food has contributed to the development of new and thriving innovation ecosystems in the food industry, marking significant progress according to the EIT Impact Framework.</p> <p>9.3 Effective Financial Sustainability Strategy, including Financial Sustainability mechanisms in place including diversified revenue sources and aligned with the original proposal and subsequent business plans/reports – <u>very good – 7</u>: EIT Food has embarked on a well-structured road toward achieving financial sustainability. By diversifying revenue sources, gradually reducing reliance on EIT funding, investing in innovation, and maintaining a focus on marketable solutions, the KIC has made significant progress in aligning its subsequent business plans with its financial sustainability strategy s. Even though there are still some room to further stabilize financial sustainability, as the data gathered through our evaluation the continuous monitoring and collaboration with various stakeholders enhance its prospects for long-term financial sustainability.</p> <p>9.4 An adequate level of revenues from its activities is demonstrated and a plan for the management and exploitation of intellectual property and financial assets supporting the KIC's business model is in place– <u>very good – 8</u>: EIT Food's aspiration for effective IP management is marked by significant progress and a commitment to adapting its strategies to meet its goals by diversifying revenue streams, enhancing IP management. The key non-EIT revenues of the KIC came from membership fees and alternative funding, while a number of other categories underperformed, which indicates insufficient diversity of income. In accordance with the conclusions of the GB Rapporteur visit of 2023, further efforts are needed to diversify its incomes and counterbalance the dominance of Membership Fees.</p> <p>9.5 Financial Sustainability (FS): revenues of KIC LE, FS coefficient – <u>good – 6</u>: Although the KIC has exceeded its set targets in revenues generated from membership fees and alternative funding sources, it has significantly underperformed in generating revenues from education and ROI. According to the GB Rapporteur visit of 2023, EIT Food has developed partnerships and made systematic changes in order to attract greater investment returns and improve its financial independence from EIT grants, which indicates a positive change for the future, however it has not yet been reflected in meeting the financial targets.</p> <p>9.6 Co-funding rates – <u>very good – 8</u>: EIT Food's co-funding rates and financial sustainability measures demonstrate a clear commitment to gradually reducing EIT' financial contribution to KIC activities over time. The emphasis is on encouraging KICs to secure a larger share of their funding from external sources to ensure their long-term viability. While there have been fluctuations in co-funding rates over the years, the trend seems to be moving towards a more balanced funding model. This approach aims to enhance financial management, reduce error rates, and ultimately contribute to the sustainability of EIT</p>		

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Scoring (points)	Weight
Global Score (after weighting was applied): 8/ 10			
Global Threshold: 6 / 10			
	<p>Food and similar initiatives. However, the challenge lies in striking the right balance between EIT's support and the ability of KICs to secure adequate co-funding from other sources to continue their activities effectively.</p> <p>9.7 Financial asset valuation – <u>good</u> – 6: EIT Food's financial assets portfolio has been growing, but there are notable weaknesses in terms of its documentation, and there is no reconciliation with audited financial statements to confirm their credibility. While there is a positive trend in increasing the number of financial assets, their significance remains limited, especially for a third wave KIC. Additionally, successful exits from these investments are not expected in the short to mid-term, which suggests a low contribution to EIT Food's financial sustainability. The provided data are based on audited financial statements but lack clarity in terms of the valuation method used, which raises concerns about the credibility of the reported financial assets. Overall, EIT Food's financial assets portfolio, while growing, faces challenges in terms of value and documentation.</p>		

4. Methodology overview

4.1. Structure of the report

The document presents the results of an evaluation of EIT Food carried out by Deloitte. The KIC was evaluated using a unified assessment approach.

The methodology used in this assessment is in line with the requirements set out in the Request for Service No. 01 implementing document¹⁷. According to this document, the assessment has been carried out through a comprehensive analysis of all areas of activities and aspects relevant for the KIC, the evaluation criteria were specified and explained in detail in the executive summary.

Scores were allocated based on the level of the fulfilment of specific indicators within each criterion, alongside the seriousness of identified shortcomings and weaknesses. The evaluation process consisted of desk research, complemented with interviews with key staff from EIT Food.

The report is organised in the following segments:

- Main activities, results, including EU added value, and KPIs achieved.
- Strengths and weaknesses: what have worked well and what did not work.
- Recommendations for improvement: what should be improved in the next years.

In addition to the chapters above, the 7-year assessment is carried out along the following aspects:

- KIC Governance and KIC Partnership,
- KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability,
- Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and Co-location Centres,
- Education & Alumni,
- Innovation,
- Entrepreneurship & Business Creation,
- EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS),
- Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC Collaboration,
- Communications, Dissemination & Outreach,
- Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks.

The report is drafted following the order of the assessment criteria and corresponding indicators. The complete list of assessment criteria and indicators are presented in the table below:

¹⁷ Ref. Ares (2022)5507243 - 01/08/2022

Table 3: Assessment criteria, indicators, and their relevant chapters

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
Relevance to the Union's global challenges (Weighting: 1.5)	1.1 The results of the KIC's activities have been relevant to the objectives of the Union, including boosting economic growth, strengthening the innovation capacity of the Member States, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach
	1.2 The results of the KIC's activities have contributed significantly to addressing the societal challenge it was designated for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach
	1.3 KIC has made evidenced progress against the following KPIs (incl. impact KPIs as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework - Societal impact KPIs EIT Food)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Alumni, • Innovation, • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation, • EIT RIS, • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach, • Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks.
	1.4 KIC has made evidenced progress against the following KPIs (incl. impact KPIs as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework - Economic Impact KPIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability, • Education & Alumni, • Innovation, • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation, • Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks.
KIC's Union added value and relevance with regard to the objectives of the EIT (Weighting: 1.5)	2.1 The KIC has created a significant European added value with respect to building a sustainable innovation ecosystem through knowledge triangle integration, and as a result has developed concrete solutions to societal challenge it addresses as foreseen in the original proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Knowledge Triangle Integration, CLCs • Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
	2.2 All KIC's activities have been fully aligned with and relevant to the EIT objectives as defined in EIT legislative framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach • Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
	2.3 KIC RIS activities have been fully aligned with the EIT RIS Implementation Guidance note 2018-2020 and RIS Implementation Framework (2021-2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach • Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration
	2.4 KIC has made evidenced progress against the following indicators (as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework): Medium-term KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
Achievement of KIC's objectives (Weighting: 1.5)	3.1 KIC has achieved/likely to achieve its 7-year Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) objectives and expected results in line with its initial strategic objectives. Any deviation from the Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) has been justified, approved by the EIT and has led to maximizing impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs • Education & Alumni • Innovation • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation • EIT RIS • Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
	3.2 The KIC has achieved its objectives and respective targets as stated in its original proposal and Strategic Agenda in relation to the societal challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability: this chapter should be mainly based on the results of the independent in-depth study Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs Education & Alumni Innovation Entrepreneurship & Business Creation EIT RIS Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration Communications, Dissemination & Outreach Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
	3.3 KPI targets including impact KPIs for up to 2024 defined in the KIC original proposal, Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) achieved/likely to be achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs Education & Alumni Innovation Entrepreneurship & Business Creation EIT RIS Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration Communications, Dissemination & Outreach Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
	3.4 The KICs have delivered EIT RIS activities and achieved results within the scope of their EIT RIS Strategies. Any deviations are duly justified and having led to maximized results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and Co-location Centres Education & Alumni Innovation Entrepreneurship & Business Creation EIT RIS Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC Collaboration

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications, Dissemination & Outreach Achieved economic and societal impact against impact targets in the KIC Strategic Agendas, EIT Impact Framework impact KPIs or market benchmarks
KICs efforts to coordinate their activities with other relevant research and innovation initiatives (Weighting: 0.5)	4.1 The KIC has achieved the concrete synergies and complementarities described in the original proposal and Strategic Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration Communications, Dissemination & Outreach
	4.2 Number of synergies with other relevant education, research and innovation initiatives in the same area of the societal challenge at national, EU and global level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergies, Complementarities & Cross-KIC collaboration
KIC's capacity to ensure openness to new members (Weighting: 0.5)	5.1 Partnership size, growth, composition and performance have been adequate for achieving the long-term objectives of the KIC Strategic Agenda (2021-2027).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs
	5.2 KIC's Calls for activities have been fully open to new members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership
	5.3 KIC has fully addressed the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on relevant GGP assessments related to openness to new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership
	5.4 Balanced representation of all key knowledge triangle players in the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs
KIC's achievements in attracting new members from across the Union (Weighting: 1)	6.1 KIC has grown to an effective sustainable innovation eco-system with partners within and outside the EU, including RIS eligible countries and regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs EIT RIS
	6.2 Number of the EU Member States covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIC Governance and KIC Partnership Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
	6.3 Number of the RIS eligible countries and regions covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players in its activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership • EIT RIS
	6.4 Balanced geographical presence of CLCs and EIT RIS Hubs in line with the strategic objectives and societal challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs • EIT RIS
	6.5 Trend of new active partners over the period of the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and Co-location Centres • EIT RIS • Communications, Dissemination & Outreach
KIC's compliance with good governance principles (Weighting: 1)	7.1 KIC fully addresses the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on the relevant GGP assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and Co-location Centres
	7.2 GB Strategic recommendations have been effectively addressed and fully implemented by the KIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership
KIC's efforts and results in designing and implementing gender-sensitive measures and activities (Weighting: 0.5)	8.1 KICs have designed and implemented gender sensitive measures and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership
	8.2 Positive expert's assessment of the outputs and results delivered by these activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Governance and KIC Partnership
KIC's capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems	9.1 The KIC has created a sustainable innovation ecosystem effectively addressing the societal challenges and skill gaps it was established for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Triangle Integration, Innovation Ecosystem and CLCs
	9.2 KIC has made evidenced progress against the following indicator (as per definition provided in the EIT Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability

Assessment criteria	Indicators	Thematic Area
and the achieved level of financial sustainability (Weighting: 2)	Framework): Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence	
	9.3 Effective Financial Sustainability Strategy, including Financial Sustainability mechanisms in place including diversified revenue sources and aligned with the original proposal and subsequent business plans/reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability • Entrepreneurship & Business Creation
	9.4 An adequate level of revenues from its activities is demonstrated and a plan for the management and exploitation of intellectual property and financial assets supporting the KIC's business model is in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability
	9.5 Financial Sustainability (FS): revenues of KIC LE, FS coefficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability
	9.6 Co-funding rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability
	9.7 Financial asset valuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIC Funding, Financial Sustainability

All data and information collected has been linked to the relevant criteria and indicators from the assessment table in the methodological note, ensuring that these can be scored appropriately and consistently against the scoring system designed by EIT.

4.2. Methodological tools

Thanks to the applied methodology, the assessment is based on robust and reliable results and incorporates multiple data sources. During the assessment, the following main methodological tools have been applied:

- Desk research;
- Document Analysis;
- Surveys;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Multi criteria analysis;
- Theory-based impact evaluation;
- Counterfactual impact evaluation– Propensity Score Matching;
- Survival analysis;
- Network analysis;
- Triangulation, conclusions and recommendations.

A detailed overview of each methodological tool could be found in Annex II.

4.3. Challenges faced in the assessment

The 7-year review of EIT Food was a long and intensive work requiring close cooperation with the KIC and EIT. During this process, several challenges were encountered that influenced the overall assessment of the KIC's performance. In Annex IV., we comprehensively analysed the challenges that arose and their implications for the evaluation process.

The challenges encountered during the evaluation process of EIT Food provide valuable insights into the complexities inherent in assessing an organization's performance over an extended period. Understanding these challenges is crucial for refining evaluation methodologies and strategies for future assessments.

5. Relevance to the EU global challenges

5.1. Relevance to the Objectives of the Union

Indicator: The results of the KIC's activities have been relevant to the objectives of the Union, including boosting economic growth, strengthening the innovation capacity of the Member States, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

EIT Food has a vital role in advancing the European Union's objectives by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth in the food sector.

Regarding progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), EIT Food has actively contributed to SDG 4 (Quality Education) through Cross-KIC activities and the knowledge triangle integration by providing pathways to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and building partnerships (SDG 17) to promote the common good. This aligns with the EU's overarching objective of improving education, creating job opportunities, and fostering global cooperation.

EIT Food's support for startups and entrepreneurs is also a direct contribution to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The support provided to startups through subgrant funds and mentorship programmes helps these emerging companies commercialize their food-related ideas, creating economic growth and employment opportunities. The focus on technology-based startups and cross-disciplinary SME partnerships promotes innovation, aligning with the EU's goal of strengthening the innovation capacity of Member States.

Collaboration between the EU and China, facilitated by EIT Food, further supports economic growth. The mutual recognition of data and standards, as well as the promotion of agrifood trade, can enhance economic opportunities for both regions.

EIT Food's engagement of local players is a critical aspect of building innovation capacity in regions that rank further back according to the Innovation Scoreboard. This engagement not only promotes entrepreneurship but also contributes to the development of innovation ecosystems in Member States, which aligns with the EU's strategic objectives.

The establishment of structural links within EIT Food enhances its innovation capacity and enables the sharing of best practices. This collaborative approach supports the EU's goal of pushing Europe forward as an innovation stronghold, particularly in the food sector.

EIT Food's various segments and innovation strategies also align with the EU's objectives. The focus on providing a full range of services to support different target groups, from students to SMEs, in the creation and development of agri-food companies is in line with the EU's aim to promote entrepreneurship and economic growth, particularly within the food industry.

Conclusion: EIT Food has demonstrated significant relevance to the objectives of the European Union. Its commitment to sustainable growth, contribution to the SDGs, support for startups and entrepreneurs, collaboration with international partners, and focus on building innovation capacity are all key drivers in advancing economic growth, strengthening innovation capacity, and fostering entrepreneurship within the Member States. The conducted assessments highlight its strengths in these areas, indicating its continued dedication to EU objectives, specifically within the food sector.

5.2. Societal challenges

Indicator: The results of the KIC's activities have contributed significantly to addressing the societal challenge it was designated for.

EIT Food is dedicated to addressing societal challenges related to the food system, sustainability, and nutrition.

One of EIT Food's flagship initiatives aims to equip young people in European countries with entrepreneurial skills, fostering a future generation of innovative thinkers who can address societal challenges. The program has made commendable progress, reaching approximately 400 young people in each participating region, providing them with essential skills and mentorship from industry partners. The programme's emphasis on addressing societal challenges through entrepreneurship and mentor-based industry programmes is a step in the right direction. Furthermore, EIT's vision aligns well with EU priorities for international cooperation, fostering research and innovation, and contributing to global problem-solving, positioning itself as an asset in tackling societal issues.

The EU Skills for the Future initiative appears to be fulfilling its objectives and is likely contributing to addressing societal challenges, particularly in the long term. By empowering young individuals with entrepreneurial skills and promoting careers in the field, it creates a potential wave of future innovators. However, a more comprehensive assessment, with specific quantitative outcomes, could provide a clearer picture of its impact.

EIT Food's commitment to addressing food-related challenges is also evident through initiatives like Connecting Food and Great Taste, Zero Waste. These programmes aim to tackle issues related to nutrition, food sustainability, and waste reduction. In the short term, they have already engaged a significant number of people and increased transparency in the food supply chain. In the mid-term, trust in the food value system has been established, benefitting all stakeholders, especially consumers. The long-term goals, including improved public health and global food security, indicate a proactive approach to addressing societal challenges in the food domain.

The Innovation Call for Proposals for 2023 accentuates EIT Food's commitment to healthier lives through food and a transparent, resilient food supply. These objectives are essential for addressing societal challenges related to health, food security, and sustainability. The call emphasizes technological advancements and innovative solutions, which are key drivers in addressing these challenges.

The initiatives Farm to Fork and Connecting Food are particularly promising, focusing on personalized nutrition, eco-footprint improvement, and digitalization in the food system. These activities hold the potential to revolutionize the way society approaches food, health, and sustainability.

Conclusion: EIT Food has taken substantial steps towards addressing the societal challenges it was designated to address. Supporting initiatives like EU Skills for the Future, Connecting Food, and Great Taste, Zero Waste represent promising development by engaging people and increasing transparency in the food supply chain aiming to improve the public health and global food systems in the long term. Alignment with EU priorities and a dedication to research and innovation make EIT Food an essential player in addressing societal challenges, as well. However, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the indicator, a more extensive, quantifiable analysis of outcomes and long-term impacts is needed as these were not measured efficiently by the KIC. Nevertheless, EIT Food's activities have contributed to a more sustainable and healthier food system that addresses the critical challenges faced by society.

5.3. Societal impact KPIs

Indicator: KIC has made evidenced progress against the following KPIs (incl. impact KPIs as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework - Societal impact KPIs EIT Food)

Increased public engagement in food system

Public Engagement is EIT Food's fourth Functional Area, which recognizes the critical role of consumers in shaping the future of food system. By involving consumers directly in the dialogue about the future of food, it has a potential to drive innovation, improve sustainability, and address many of the challenges the food system faces today. EIT Food's Public Engagement portfolio is designed to address several interconnected objectives, which ultimately contribute to solving societal challenges within the food industry. The KIC committed to actively engaging 212,000 individuals in purposeful initiatives to promote healthier and more sustainable behaviours, with an additional 20,000 participants engaging in co-creation activities in its 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, as shown in Annex I. Moreover, the KIC established the Education team which made a great impact in social media and gained 6,3 million engagements and 13,925 followers on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

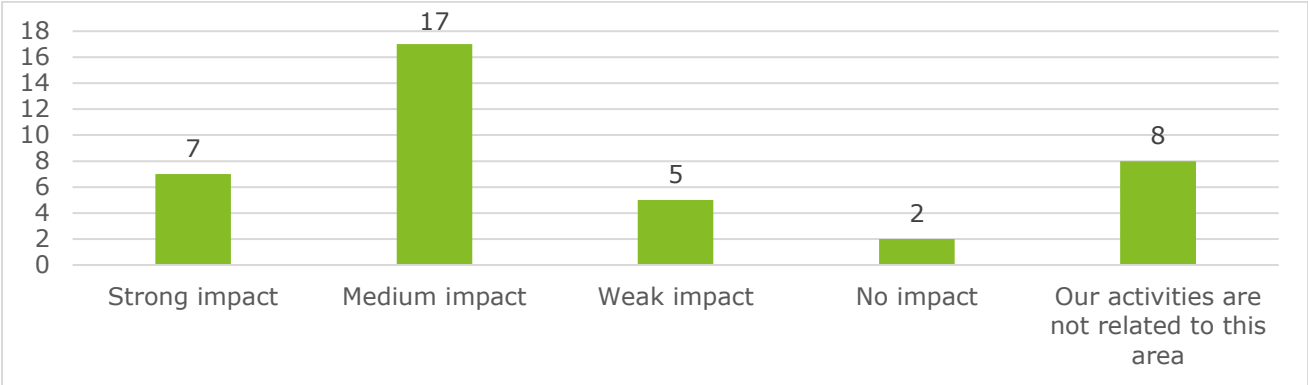
As described in the KIC report 2022, EIT Food's consumer engagement activities predominantly took place online between 2021 and 2022. These efforts included the expansion of the Citizen Participation Forum to include discussions on alternative proteins and innovation barriers as well as organizing FoodUnfolded dialogues, particularly during the 2021 United Nations Food System Summit and the 2022 Future of Food Conference in Brussels, resulting in significant impacts on various critical topics and reaching a wide audience. Furthermore, EIT Food made significant strides in enhancing its communication and engagement impact during 2021-22, primarily by focusing on thematic storytelling, large-scale campaigns, and actively involving change-makers, resulting in an impressive 14 million engagements across corporate social media platforms during this period, while the EIT Food website received nearly 1.5 million visits. FoodUnfolded attracted over one million visitors through its website and garnered 13.5 million interactions via social media over the course of two years, indicating a substantial online presence. Additionally, between 2021 and 2022 the annual Future of Food Conference convened more than 1000 policymakers, EIT Food partners, research, and innovation stakeholders, and agrifood experts, while EIT Food's Public Engagement portfolio facilitated the engagement of over 40,000 citizens through surveys and focus groups to enhance comprehension of the obstacles and incentives associated with different facets of food system transformation. Furthermore, EIT Food successfully heightened its visibility with the United Nations and strengthened its rapport with the European Commission through its Policy Advisory Board (PAB), bringing together the KIC and Commission representatives from several DGs (EAC, RTD, AGRI, SANTE, MARE, GROW, ENV, JCR).

In the upcoming period from 2023 to 2025 as detailed in the BP for the respective years, EIT Food aims to actively involve 95,000 individuals through various channels, such as our Trust Tracker and Citizens Participation Forum. Additionally, in 2023, the KIC also introduced the EIT Food Consumer Observatory.

According to the responses in the partner survey, the majority of the respondents (61%) reported being engaged in activities with a significant to moderate impact in promoting increased public engagement in the food system. In contrast, 18% of respondents mentioned weak to no impact, while 21% of respondents

stated that their activities are not connected to this area. These findings underscore the importance of initiatives that encourage public involvement in shaping the food system.

Figure 1: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the achievement of increased public engagement in food system"



Increased adoption & uptake of innovation in the food system

The KIC original proposal emphasizes the importance of promoting the uptake of innovative outputs by the food system under the Strategic Objective SO6: Catalyse food entrepreneurship and innovation. As stated in the 2021-2022 Business Plan, the Innovation Call for Proposals in 2021 was structured around six Focus Areas and their associated Challenges, in which partner consortia presented marketable solutions aimed at benefiting citizens and achieving the desired impact through their projects. The EIT Food community successfully concluded collaborative projects using the Hype Open Innovation digital platform, allowing partners to participate in webinars and ideation sessions in a secure online environment, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions. The following impact KPIs has been defined as part of the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 with regards to increased adoption & uptake of innovation in the food system:

- # new entrepreneurs supported by EIT Food and starting a new business within 3 years;
- # start-ups and scale ups supported by EIT Food trading and reporting 1.5X increased revenue 3 years after support ceased;
- Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence developed with the support of EIT Food.

According to the KIC reported data for 2023, the number of new entrepreneurs supported by EIT Food which started a new business within 3 years is 75 and there are 5 visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence developed with the support of EIT Food. However, no data is available of the number of start-ups and scale ups supported by EIT Food which traded and reported 1.5X increased revenue 3 years after support ceased as the 2024 in-depth evaluation of financial and other SROI factors was still underway during the analysed period.

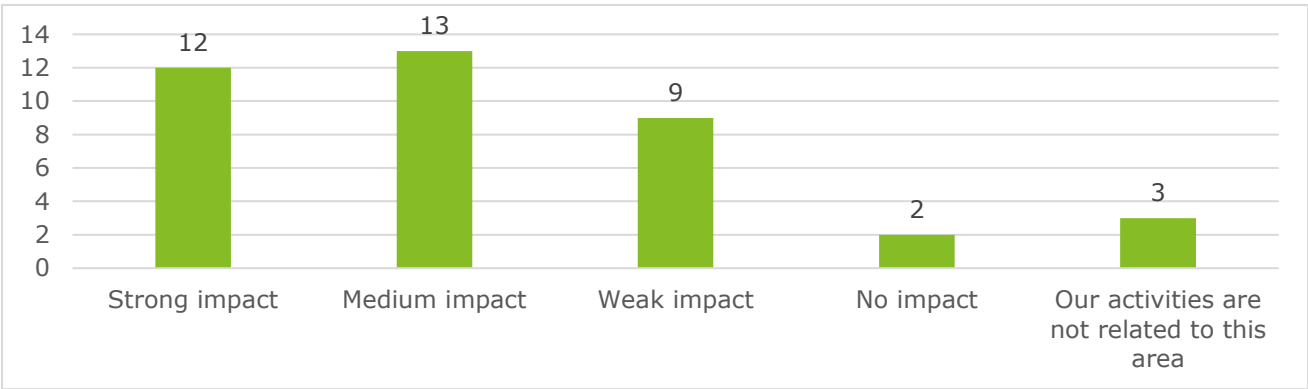
According to the KIC Report 2022, in 2021-2022, the Innovation portfolio comprised 49 Innovation KAVAs, serving as comprehensive support for partners throughout the EIT business cycle. This period saw the introduction of several new initiatives and calls, such as the Fast Track Initiative 2021, which led to the establishment of 4 fast-tracked KAVAs, and the Aquaculture Call, which resulted in 6 strategic KAVAs. Additionally, Prize-based Challenges in collaboration with industry sponsors and yearly Calls for Proposals were launched to welcome new Innovation KAVAs starting in 2022 and 2023. In 2023 Success Sharing Mechanism (SSM) for innovation KAVAs was introduced, which resulted in the implementation of uncapped return potential for over-performing projects. The new SSM provides better investment opportunities and promote the KIC's development process towards financial independency.

The EIT Assessment of the KIC Interim Report 2021 highlighted that in general, the achievements of Innovation portfolio are in alignment with the KIC Strategic Agenda, and the integration of the knowledge triangle is reasonably evident in the portfolio. According to the assessment, the overall performance of the

Innovation portfolio in 2021 was largely satisfactory. However, the assessment also pointed out that the knowledge triangle integration of the Innovation and Research portfolio appears to favour Business Creation significantly over Education, as there are relatively fewer KAVAs with educational activities and that there has been a limited achievement of KPIs in Marketed Innovations (EITHE02.1), with only a few products successfully brought to market. According to 2021-22 EIT Assessment Report the underperformance in this portfolio was in several cases related to the fact that the Innovation and Research projects failed to deliver the planned targets for the marketed innovation KPI. This suggests the need for increased focus and effort in product commercialization to meet these KPIs.

According to the partner survey results, approximately 65% of respondents have participated in activities with a substantial to moderate impact on the increased adoption and uptake of innovation within the food system. In contrast, about 28% reported weak to no impact, and 7% of respondents stated that their activities are not connected to this domain. These results highlight the notable influence of innovative practices in the food system and suggest that further efforts may be needed to enhance adoption in some cases.

Figure 2: Response to the survey question “To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the increased adoption & uptake of innovation in the food system”



Increased intake of foods with healthier nutritional profile

The KIC original proposal highlights the importance of creating consumer valued food for healthier nutrition, under Strategic Objective SO2. According to the proposal, the aim is to empower individuals to make informed and cost-effective personalized nutrition decisions through methods like direct engagement, novel product ideas, informative packaging, and innovations in electronic communication. The project’s goal was to provide commercially viable and affordable personalized nutrition solutions for a minimum of ten specific target groups within a seven-year timeframe and to achieve the recommended intake of levels of sugar, salt and saturated fat among more than 60% of EU citizens in 10 years’ time. Furthermore, as detailed in the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027, the objective for 2027 is to have 20 products supported by EIT Food available in the market with reduced levels of salt, free sugars, trans fats, and saturated fats, meeting or exceeding the recommended Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Europe. Alternatively, the products can also be those with enhanced nutritional profiles. The number of EIT Food supported products on the market with levels of salt &/ or free sugars &/or trans & saturated fats reduced to, or below, recommended Food has been defined as impact KPI in the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 in relation to NCDs & obesity.

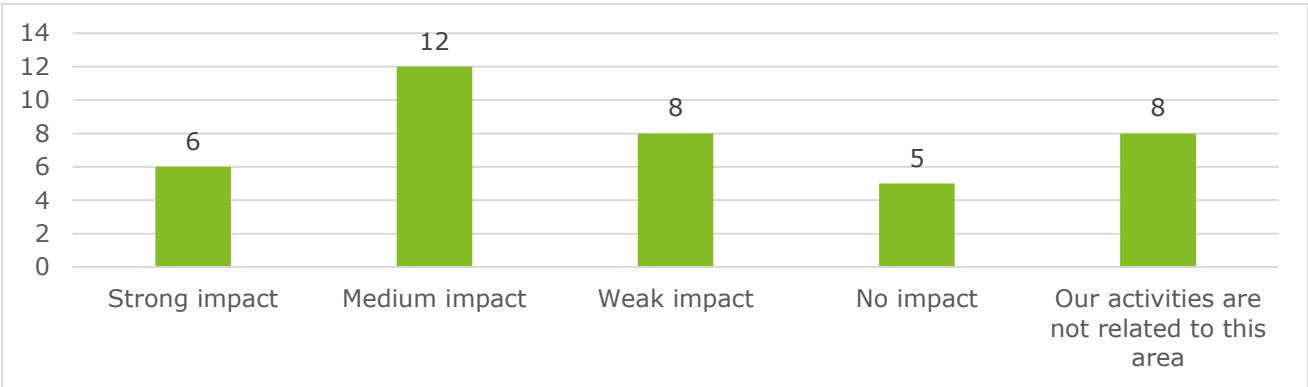
As of 2023, there are 28 products or processes on the market launched using revalorised and/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, therefore the results imply that the KIC was successful in reducing the risk of obesity & NCDs.

EIT Food provides support to projects that bring forth innovative approaches to achieve specific nutritional interventions, ultimately enhancing the impact of dietary choices on health and overall well-being, such as the Sugar out Protein-In, Sustained energy release starchy food products, TrustTracker and Food4Senior projects. However, during a validation interview held in September 2023 EIT Food claimed that as consumer

behaviour trends are affected by a myriad of factors, it is rather difficult to overcome systematic barriers hindering the increased intake of healthier foods of consumers.

Based on the partner survey results, approximately 46% of respondents have encountered strong to medium impacts associated with the promotion of increased consumption of foods with a healthier nutritional profile in their involved activities. In contrast, 33% of respondents indicated weak to no impact, with 20% stating that their activities are unrelated to this area. These findings emphasize the significance of efforts to encourage and promote healthier dietary choices.

Figure 3: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the increased intake of foods with healthier nutritional profile"



Reduction in relative risk (R) of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors

The KIC original proposal emphasized the importance of transforming prevalent dietary patterns to reduce the number of people suffering from obesity and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Furthermore, in 2021, the revised Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 introduced the 'reduction in relative risk of obesity & NCD prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors' as one of the four major Impact Goals.

As described in the 2021-2022 Business Plan, under Focus Area 3: Targeted Nutrition, EIT Food is dedicated to fostering novel approaches for targeted nutritional interventions tailored to specific population groups, with a primary focus on enhancing the impact of diet on health and overall well-being. Their aim is to facilitate the development of new solutions or the adaptation of existing ones that can significantly contribute to reducing the risk of NCDs, particularly obesity among both children and adults, as well as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. To achieve these goals, the following impact KPIs have been defined as part of the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027:

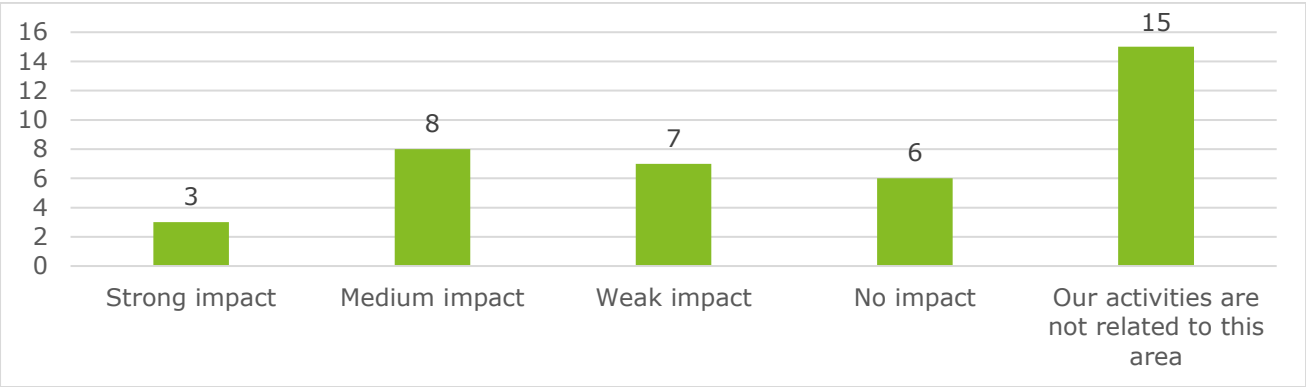
- # consumers using technology, products or guidance developed with the support of EIT Food to personalise or change diet in line with relevant Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Europe.
- # new digital solutions in use to improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency.

As of 2023, overall 9,000 consumers use technology, products or guidance developed with the support of EIT Food to personalize or change diet in line with relevant Food-Based Dietary Guidelines and 29 new digital solutions are in use, which improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency, indicating that both KPIs greatly exceeded the established targets, highlighting the success of these initiatives.

The survey outcomes reveal that a minority (28%) of partners have actively participated in activities that show a significant or moderate impact on reducing the relative risk of obesity and non-communicable diseases, while a slightly larger portion (33%) reported weak to no impact. Notably, the majority of respondents (38%) stated that their activities are unrelated to addressing the reduction of the risk of obesity

and NCDs. This underscores the need for broader engagement and coordinated efforts to address these critical health concerns.

Figure 4: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to reduction in relative risk (R) of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors



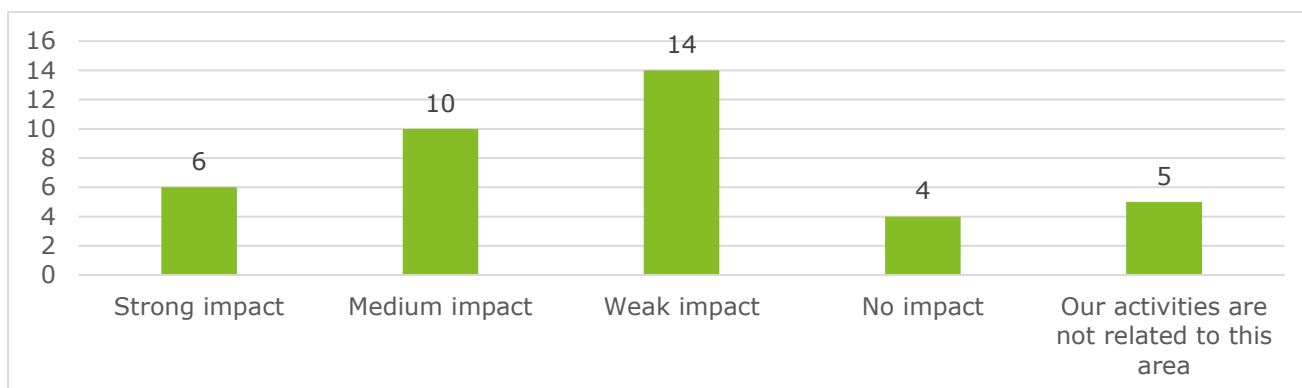
Improved Food Safety & Security

The KIC Original Proposal established those actions will include the development of guidelines and enhanced labelling for production, hygiene, food safety and shelf-life under Strategic Objective SO2.2: A superior nutritional composition through collaborative innovation. EIT Food’s determined overall goals regarding food safety and security, such as to bring a profound transformation in the current food system and to be able to satisfy the increasing global demand regarding food security. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Annex I. as well, the KIC’s activities aim to provide 10 new digital solutions aiming to improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency by 2024. A total of 25 new digital solutions designed to enhance supply chain efficiency, integrity, and transparency have been adopted as of 2023, indicating that the KIC was successful in improving food safety & security.

As determined in the 2020 Business Plan, multiple KAVAs were aimed at creating an impact by deploying an end-to-end food chain model. This approach would enable to encompass details regarding the origins, historical background, food safety, and nutritional content of every food item. Additionally, EIT Food’s Global Food Security initiative aimed to foster collaboration and the exchange of information among academia, industry and civil society on topics related to food safety & security and sustainable healthy diet.

The partner survey results indicate that a larger portion of respondents (46%) have been engaged in activities with a weak to no impact in terms of achieving food safety and security, compared to those reporting strong to medium impact (41%). Additionally, 12% stated that their activities are unrelated to this domain. These findings suggest the need for further efforts and improvements in this area to meet the established targets.

Figure 5: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the achievement of improved food safety & security"



Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food systems

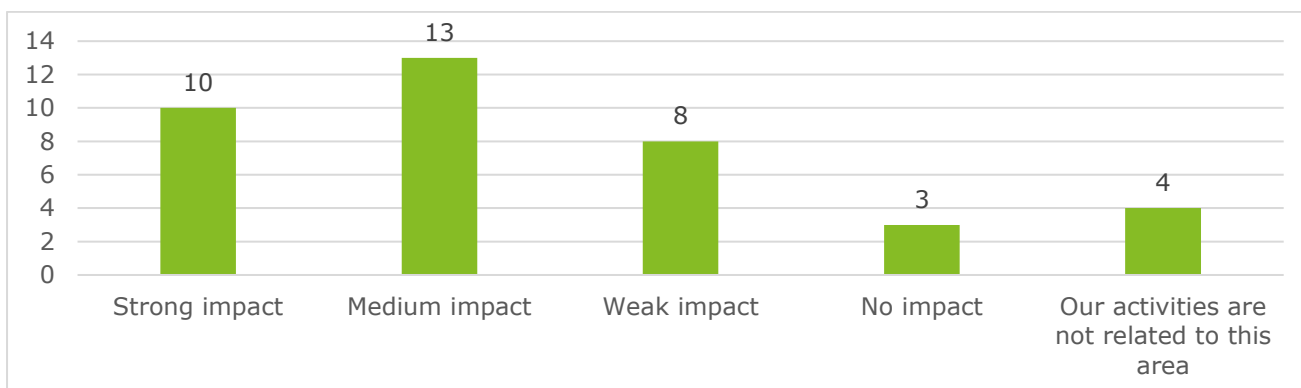
According to the KIC original proposal developed in 2016, the environmental impact of food production is substantial, with it accounting for 37% of land use, 70% of freshwater usage, and 25% of CO₂ emissions. Moreover, a significant 32% of all globally produced food goes to waste from production to consumption. To steer future economic growth in Europe's food sector away from depleting finite resources, EIT Food established goals to pioneer innovative circular bio-economy solutions and to concentrate on exploring novel sourcing methods and enhancing sustainability under Strategic Objective SO4: Enhance sustainability through resource stewardship. The objective of this strategic goal is to significantly decrease the environmental footprint of the entire food supply chain, encompassing the journey from producer to consumer, through the adoption of a circular bio-economy approach. Additionally, according to the KIC original Proposal, potential environmental impacts of EIT Food's activities shall contribute to innovative solutions, to improve resource efficiency and biodiversity, to substantially decrease waste accomplished through the establishment of collective resource stewardship and to decrease environmental impacts across the entire food supply chain. Additionally, in Annex I. details on the defined impact KPIs could be found regarding improved environmental impact of agri-food systems.

As shown in Annex I., there are 28 solutions identified regarding the volume reduction in CO₂ equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system. With regards to the number of new products launched with EIT Food support using revalorized &/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, the initial target for 2024 was set for 15 products, however as of 2023, there are currently only 10 products on the market, indicating that there is a limited environmental impact of agri-food systems from the KIC's innovations. In terms of the number of EIT Food-supported products on the market derived from alternative resources, the KIC fell short of its specified target, with only 12 products instead of 15.

According to the 2020 Business Plan, Strategic objective SO4 will be achieved by addressing the two main Innovation Priorities defined through a partner consultation: first by creating technologies or processes that target environmental hotspots by providing new, environmentally friendly food and beverage options accepted by consumers, and second by empowering consumers to minimize waste, emissions, and resource usage through prevention and recycling. Additionally, the KIC would focus on expanding the market presence of sustainable ingredients from alternative sources like plants, residues, algae, marine sources, fungi, yeast, etc., and on supporting projects that repurpose by-products into consumer-accepted, sustainable food, non-food, and beverage alternatives (e.g.: EIT Food plans to create innovative packaging for red meat, fish and poultry using materials sourced from agricultural food waste).

Results from the partner survey show that a significant majority (59%) of respondents have been engaged in initiatives that contribute to enhancing the environmental sustainability of the agri-food system. Conversely, only 28% reported having limited to no impact, with 10% indicating that their activities are unrelated to this area. These findings emphasize the potential for further efforts to enhance the sustainability of the agri-food system.

Figure 6: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food systems"

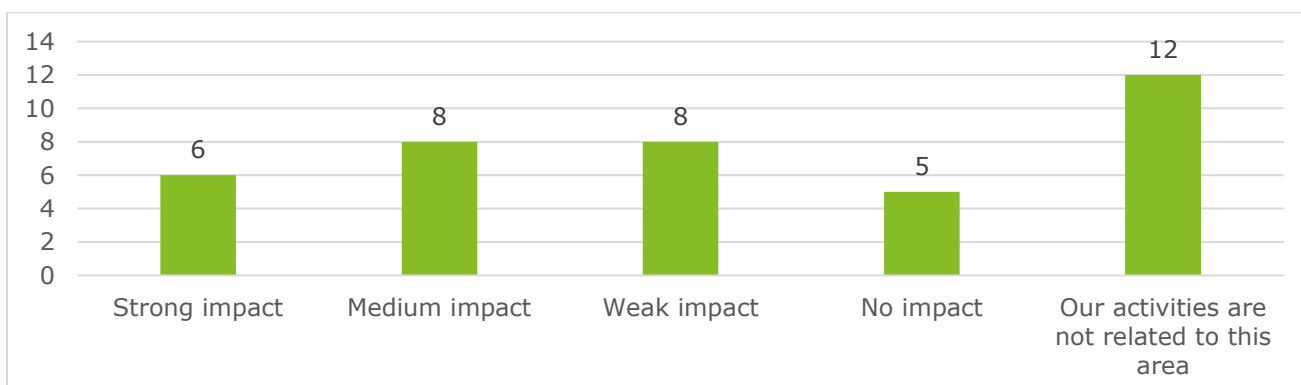


Products on the market derived from alternative sources

The KIC original proposal established the goal to increase the market penetration of ingredients from sustainable and alternative resources under Strategic objective – SO4.2. This objective emphasizes the increasing need for developing technologies and processes related to major macro and micro-nutrients, as well as energy sources like carbohydrates, obtained from sustainable sources, which could involve methods such as biofortification, precision agriculture and sustainable intensification. Specific KPIs in relation to Strategic Objective SO4.2 have been established in the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda. The presence of 18 EIT Food products on the market derived from alternative resources, exceeds the initially established target of 15 for 2024, as outlined in Annex I. This suggests that the KIC places great emphasis on enhancing the environmental impact of the agri-food system.

Based on the partner survey results, it's apparent that a relatively smaller portion of respondents reported involvement in activities related to products on the market derived from alternative sources with a strong to medium impact (36%). In contrast, a similar percentage noticed weak to no impact (33%). Interestingly, a significant number of respondents indicated that their activities were not connected to this area, suggesting that there is room for increased engagement and collaboration in the development and promotion of products derived from alternative sources with stronger impacts.

Figure 7: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to products on the market derived from alternative sources"



Reduction in Food Waste & Food Loss

According to the KIC original proposal, cutting-edge technologies will be harnessed to specifically address and diminish food waste under Strategic Objective SO4.1: Tackle hotspots in the environmental footprint.

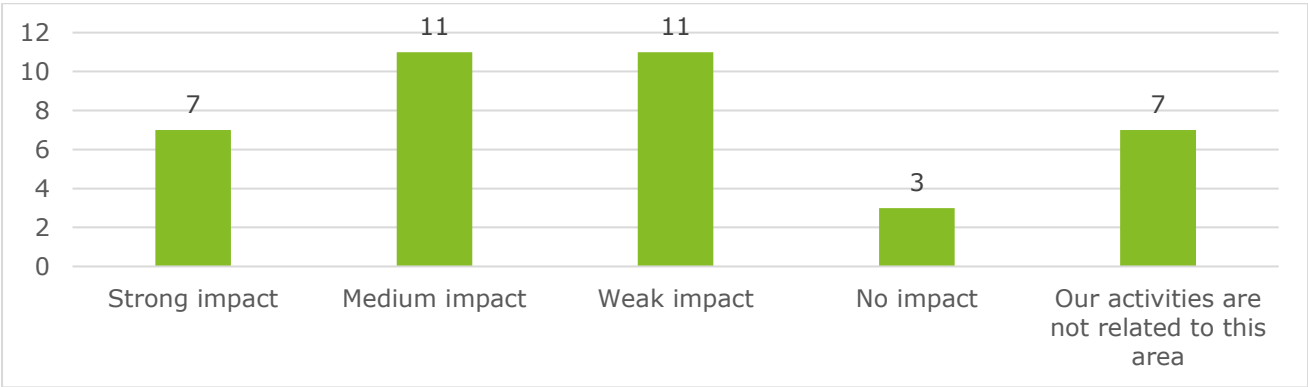
As stated in the proposal, efforts to minimize food losses would involve the development of novel food manufacturing processes, guided by quality standards and guidelines, the creation of real-time monitoring systems and communication networks among various stakeholders, as well as the utilization of unavoidable food waste through the implementation of management and decision-making tools. These tools would optimize logistics, regulatory compliance, technology, economics, environmental factors, and social considerations as well. Furthermore, the proposal also highlights the goal to achieve 50% decrease in food waste on the supply side in innovation activities. In terms of the number of new products introduced with EIT Food support, utilizing revalorized and/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, the initial target for 2024 was 15 products, as demonstrated in Annex I. However, as of 2023, there are only 10 products available on the market, suggesting that the environmental impact of agri-food systems of EIT Food’s innovations remains limited, and there is a gap to reach the established targets.

The available data shows that the KIC meets the target number of 15 for 2024 regarding the new products or processes launched with EIT Food support using revalorized and/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste-streams. However, there is no data available regarding the decrease in food waste on the supply side in innovation activities for the analysed period. According to the 2020 Business Plan, EIT Food collaborates with DG SANTE and the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste to foster synergies with its innovation projects in relation to the Great Taste, Zero Waste. The 2020 Business Plan also highlighted that potential partnerships would be explored with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in the areas of consumer engagement and the dissemination of science-based information. Additionally, EIT Food has made contributions to two projects: Amsterdam's Food Strategy, with a primary focus on reducing food waste within retail, catering, and households; and Leuven's Food Strategy, where the emphasis lies on diminishing food waste and addressing issues related to food packaging.

Based on the EIT assessment of the KIC Interim Report 2021, sustainability within food chains is a top priority for most of the KAVAs. According to the EIT assessment of the KIC Report 2020, in terms of performance, the Sustainability and Resource Stewardship segment (SO4) demonstrated a strong overall performance, surpassing the Food for Healthier Nutrition segment (SO2) by a significant margin. Furthermore, as stated in the EIT assessment of the KIC Report 2019, both the Great Taste, Zero Waste and Web of Food segments exhibited strong overall performance.

The survey results reveal that 46% of respondents who have participated in activities related to the reduction of food waste and food loss reported a strong to medium impact. However, there is still a substantial portion of respondents, 36%, who reported weak to no impact in their efforts, while 18% noted that their activities are unrelated to this area, suggesting a need for enhanced impact and broader participation in addressing food waste and loss.

Figure 8: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the reduction of food waste & food loss"

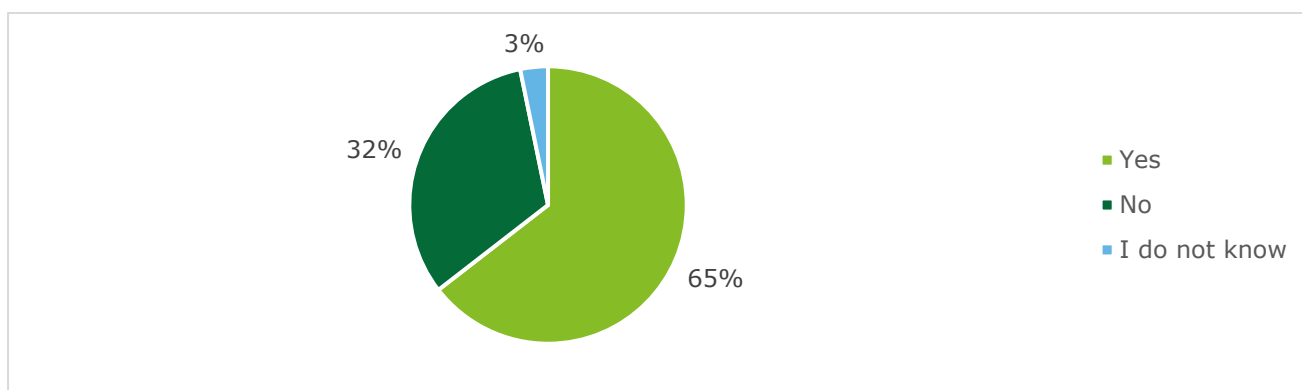


Alumni retained in the food system

The Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 highlighted the percentage of alumni of KIC Education activities retained in the food system as impact KPI. In the name of expanding relationships with other KICs and exploring further synergies, EIT Food Alumni Board was established and several synergies were coordinated in the EntreComp Synergies project.

The graduate survey results reveal that a significant majority of alumni (65%) are presently working within the food system. Conversely, 32% of respondents indicated that they are not employed in the agricultural sector, and 3% were uncertain whether their current employment status is within the food sector.

Figure 9: Response to the graduate survey question "Are you currently working in the food system?"



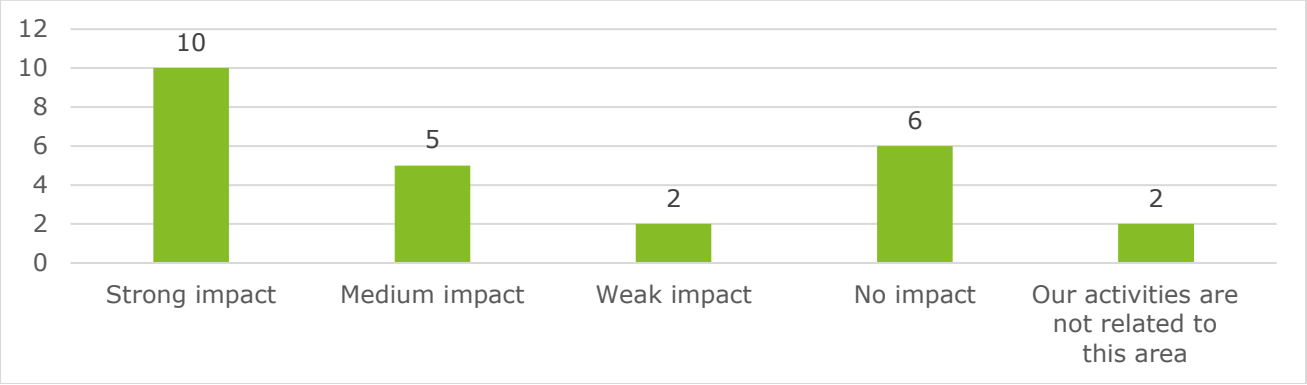
New skills and professions developed in the food sector

According to the KIC's original proposal, EIT Food' mission is to enhance skills and foster entrepreneurial spirit within the agriculture sector. The proposal emphasizes that there is a shortage of the scientific, entrepreneurial, and managerial skills, which are required to intricate multidisciplinary challenges, which represent significant impediments to innovation. Furthermore, the proposal highlights that EIT Food intends to offer food system skills to over 10,000 students, entrepreneurs, and SME professionals, addressing specific skill deficiencies through advanced training programmes under Strategic Objective SO5: Educate to engage, innovate and advance. Additionally, the KIC plans to reach approximately 285,000 individuals through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) within a span of 7 years. To achieve this, EIT Food would create an exclusive, cost-effective EIT-branded MSc program to bridge gaps in fragmented skills and knowledge under SO5.1: Demand-driven higher education for students and professionals, and would establish The Academy, which would develop critical skills required for starting and progressing a career to become a leader in a digitally empowered, resource-efficient food system. Moreover, the EIT Food Strategic Agenda established the new skills and professions developed as the KPI concerning Strategic Objective SO5 (Annex I.).

The design of support and interventions for further development of new skills and professions are driven by the EIT Food Competency Framework¹⁸, which categorises 8 emerging professional disciplines consisting out of 4 competency levels in order to improve the career and education opportunities in the agri-food sector. The survey results highlight a positive trend, with 60% of start-ups reporting a strong to medium impact on nurturing entrepreneurial and innovation skills. However, a notable portion of start-ups, 32%, reported weak to no impact, while 8% stated that their activities were unrelated to this domain. This suggests that while many start-ups are making significant progress in fostering these skills, there is room for improvement and a need for broader engagement in this area.

¹⁸ [EIT-Brochure-Competency-Framework](#)

Figure 10: Response to the survey question “To the best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your start-up has been engaged in regarding fostering the development of entrepreneurial and innovation skills in a lifelong learning perspective

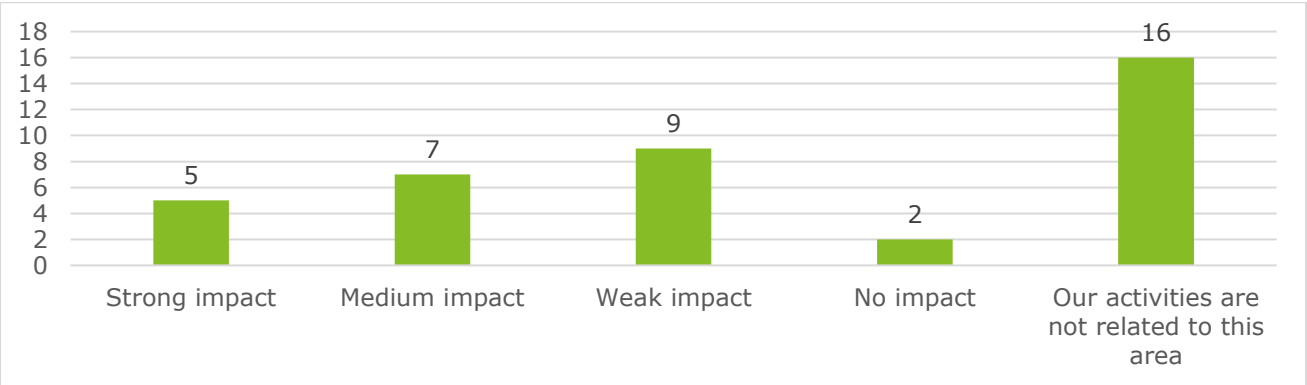


Improvement in food system contribution to outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework (including inter alia waste management, recycling, competitiveness & innovation)

As discussed in the previous section, regarding the introduction of new products supported by EIT Food that utilize revalorized and/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, the initial target for 2024 was 15 products. As of 2023, 15 such products are in the market, indicating that the environmental impact of agri-food systems is currently making planned efforts to meet the set targets. According to the KIC reported data of 2023, there are 75 new entrepreneurs supported by EIT Food. However, no data is available regarding the number of start-ups & scale-ups supported by EIT Food trading and reporting 1.5X increased revenue 3 years after support ceased.

The survey findings suggest that a substantial ratio of partners (41%) have activities not directly related to the subject matter, while a noteworthy portion (31%) is making a positive impact with strong to medium impact, and 28% are currently experiencing weak to no impact in their endeavours within the area, highlighting the need for increased alignment and effectiveness in addressing the contribution to the EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework.

Figure 11: Response to the survey question "To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to the contribution to the EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework"



Improved efficiency and sustainability of food systems

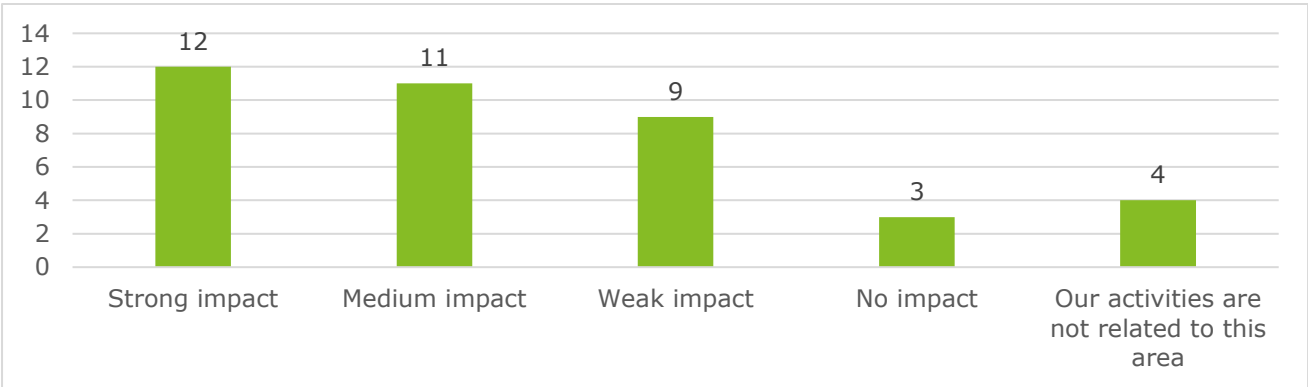
The Great Taste, Zero Waste investigates and employs bioeconomy pathways to identify favourable approaches for enhancing resource efficiency. Examples of such activities among others include the development of innovative modular packaging systems and employing smart logistics approaches to minimize food transportation distances.

The 2021-2027 SA determined the number of new digital solutions in use to improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency as KPIs in relation to improved efficiency and sustainability of food systems.

By 2023, through EIT Food 25 new digital solutions have been implemented to boost supply chain efficiency, integrity, and transparency have been adopted. This achievement signifies that the KIC has been successful in enhancing food safety and security, signifying that the KIC has been successful in improving efficiency and sustainability of the food system.

The survey results indicate a significant level of engagement, with the majority of respondents (59%) actively participating in activities aimed at improving the efficiency and sustainability of food systems, and most of them reported strong to medium impacts. On the other hand, a smaller percentage (31%) reported weak to no impact, while 10% noted that their activities were unrelated to this area, suggesting a substantial positive impact in this domain and room for further improvement and engagement.

Figure 12: Response to the survey question “To best of your knowledge, please indicate the level of impact of activities your organization has been engaged in as a partner linked to improved efficiency and sustainability of food systems”



Conclusion: Involvement of consumers directly in the dialogue regarding the future of food has the potential to enhance innovation, sustainability and resolve many of the food system’s actual problems and challenges. EIT Food’s initiatives achieved great success in promoting societal dialogue between academical, industrial and civil actors in connection with food security and sustainability. Evaluators can highlight various self-organized forums and summits like the Citizen Participation Forum, grandiose research based on surveys and focus groups, and the creation of communication platforms and channels established in the name of fostering collaboration and information exchange. Many advances have been made against food waste and food loss; the Great Taste, Zero Waste and We of Food segments exhibited strong overall performance. Besides the strengths, we can conclude that further efforts are needed to enhance the environmental sustainability of the agri-food system according to the results of the partner survey as a large part of the respondents have limited or no impact in the related initiatives. Increased engagement and collaboration in the development and promotion of products derived from alternative sources with stronger impacts are suggested.

Hereunder, a Multi-Criteria Analysis table for the evaluation of the societal impact KPIs for better transparency and easier understanding of KIC’s performance within the 11 criteria.

Table 4: MCA of Societal impact KPIs

Indicator	Short assessment	Score ¹⁹
Increased public engagement in food system	EIT Food increased public engagement in the food system through a range of initiatives, such as online forums, thematic storytelling, and collaboration with the United Nations and the European Commission. While specific impact data is missing, these efforts indicate a proactive approach to involve the public.	3 – Good
Increased adoption & uptake of innovation in the food system	EIT Food promoted the adoption of innovation in the food system by offering comprehensive support and introducing new initiatives that led to the launch of numerous products and services. The overall performance aligns with their agenda, but there's room for improvement, especially in product commercialization, as suggested by partner survey results.	3 – Good
Increased intake of foods with healthier nutritional profile	EIT Food achieved its goal of increasing the intake of healthier foods by launching 15 products with improved nutritional profiles. They supported innovative projects to enhance dietary choices, although systemic barriers in consumer behaviour pose challenges. Survey results show that 46% of respondents reported a strong to medium impact, emphasizing the importance of initiatives to promote healthier eating.	3 – Good
Reduction in relative risk (R) of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors	EIT Food has excelled in reducing the risk of obesity and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) by surpassing their KPI targets. They've engaged 9,000 consumers in personalized diet initiatives and introduced 25 digital solutions for supply chain improvement. While partner survey results suggest the need for broader engagement.	3 – Good
Improved Food Safety & Security	EIT Food has successfully improved food safety and security by exceeding their KPI target, with 25 new digital solutions enhancing supply chain efficiency, integrity, and transparency. The KIC has also employed a comprehensive approach, including end-to-end food chain modelling and a Global Food Security policy initiative, fostering collaboration and information exchange. However, partner survey results reveal that there is room for improvement,	3 – Good

¹⁹ Scoring on a 1 to 4 scale where: 1-Bad; 2-Weak; 3-Good and 4-Excellent

Indicator	Short assessment	Score ¹⁹
	with 46% of respondents reporting weak to no impact, highlighting the need for further efforts in this area.	
Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food systems	EIT Food has taken steps to improve the environmental impact of agri-food systems by developing guidelines and focusing on circular bio-economy solutions. As 59% of respondents in the partner survey have engaged in sustainability initiatives, the organization met or in some cases exceeded its KPI targets, with 15 products from revalorized side-streams and 18 products from alternative sources instead of the targeted 15 for 2024.	4 - Excellent
Products on the market derived from alternative sources	EIT Food has made progress in promoting products derived from alternative sources, but it has exceeded its KPI target, with 18 products on the market with the intended 15 by 2024. Partner survey results show room for improvement in engagement and collaboration in the development and promotion of such products.	4 - Excellent
Reduction in Food Waste & Food Loss	EIT Food's initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and food loss have seen progress, with 15 new products introduced using revalorized and/or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams. This number already meets the 2024 target of 15 products, indicating substantial improvement. However, partner survey results show a need for increased impact and broader participation in addressing food waste and loss.	3 - Good
New skills and professions developed in the food sector	EIT Food aims to enhance skills and entrepreneurial spirit in the agriculture sector, intending to offer food system skills to over 10,000 individuals through advanced training programs and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). While specific data on new skills and professions is unavailable, 60% of start-ups have experienced a positive impact on nurturing entrepreneurial and innovation skills, indicating progress. However, 32% reported weak to no impact, emphasizing the need for broader engagement in this area.	3 - Good
Improvement in food system contribution to outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework	EIT Food's 'FoodConnects Assistant' program aims to enhance the food system's contribution to the EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework. Progress is seen in developing products from food system side-streams and waste streams, but only 10 out of the targeted 15 are available on the market by 2023. Unfortunately, there's no data on new entrepreneurs and start-ups. Survey results show mixed impact: 41% of partners are not directly related to this area,	2 - Weak

Indicator	Short assessment	Score ¹⁹
	31% are making a positive impact, and 28% have weak to no impact.	
Improved efficiency and sustainability of food systems	EIT Food's focus on improving the efficiency and sustainability of food systems is evident in the adoption of 25 new digital solutions, surpassing the 2024 target of 20. The survey results also highlight strong engagement and impact, with 59% of respondents actively participating and reporting strong to medium impacts.	3 - Good

5.4. Economic Impact KPIs

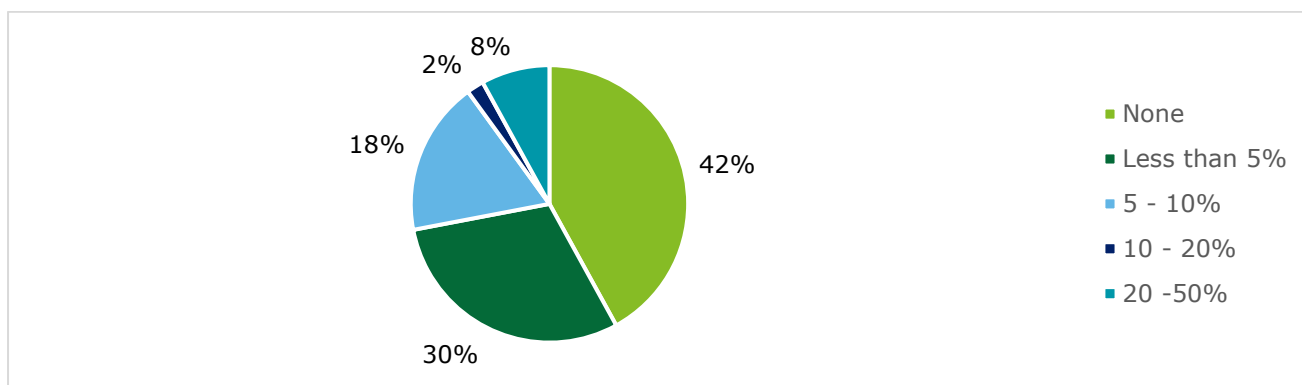
Indicator: KIC has made evidenced progress against the following KPIs (incl. impact KPIs as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework - Economic impact KPIs EIT Food

Contribution to revenue growth of organizations trading or employing innovations developed with the KIC support

By analysing the responses obtained from the EIT Food supported startup survey, the influence of EIT Food support on the growth of startup revenues can be established as follows:

- 42% of respondents indicated that EIT Food funding had no influence (None): This particular group of start-ups did not observe significant revenue growth that could be directly attributed to EIT Food support. The lack of noticeable impact may be influenced by various factors, including market conditions, or external factors that influenced their revenue growth.
- 30% of respondents indicated that EIT Food support had very small (less than 5%) influence: similarly, these startups experienced only marginal revenue growth, typically less than 5%. This implies that while there may have been some positive influence, it was not substantial in terms of revenue generation.
- 18% of respondents indicated that EIT Food support had small (5-10%) influence: Startups categorized in this group achieved modest revenue growth, typically falling within the range of 5-10%. This suggests a moderate, yet favourable, influence on their revenue generation endeavours.
- 2% of respondents indicated that EIT Food support had medium (10-20%) influence: A small portion of startups achieved revenue growth between 10% and 20% thanks to EIT Food support. Those within this group could experience more substantial positive effect, indicating that the KIC provided support played a significant role in their revenue growth.
- 8% of respondents indicated that EIT Food support had major (20-50%) influence: A slightly larger segment of startups reported a significant revenue growth in the range of 20% to 50%, directly attributed to EIT Food support. This suggests that, for these startups, the KIC support had a notable impact on their revenue generation and overall business expansion.
- 0% of respondents indicated that EIT Food support had exceptional (more than 50%) influence: None of the startups achieved exceptional success where more than half of their revenue growth could be directly attributed to EIT Food support. This suggests that there were no startups that demonstrated a very strong positive correlation between the KIC support and their revenue generation.

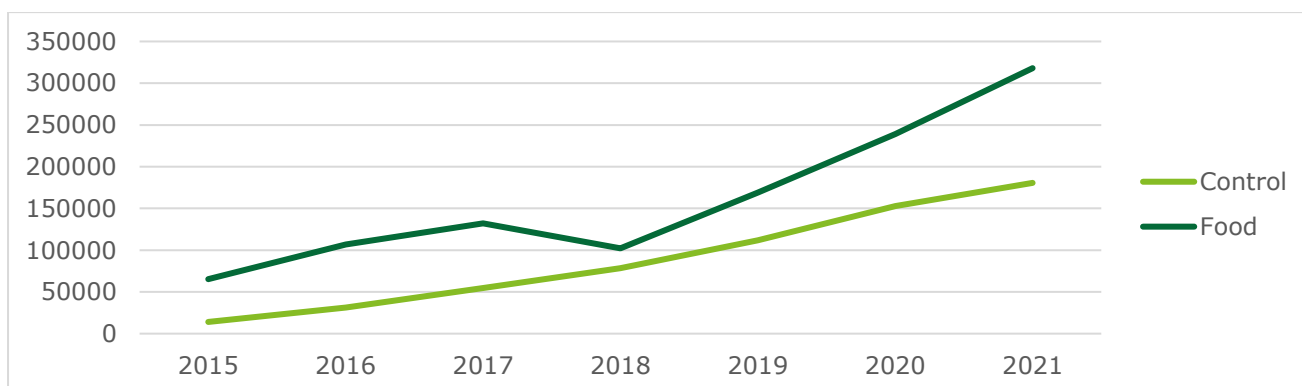
Figure 13: Answers to the survey question how much the funding from EIT Food contributed to the start-up's revenue growth



Additionally, according to the 2022 Annual Report of EIT Food, start-ups and scale-ups supported by EIT Food attracted EUR 224.7 M of external funding in 2022.

Deloitte analysed the EIT KIC support's impact on the revenues of the enterprises. Deloitte received enterprise level data from an external service provider (D&B Hoovers) for the supported and the control groups.²⁰ The subsequent figure illustrates the disparity in sales growth rates between the two groups, highlighting that, for the most part of the observed period (2017-2021), the KIC supported enterprises exhibited a notably swifter increase in their revenue compared to the control group.

Figure 14: Net sales



To ascertain whether the observed difference can be attributed to the support provided by EIT KIC, Deloitte employed a counterfactual impact evaluation utilizing propensity score matching. This methodology effectively eliminates discernible variations between the two groups, allowing to isolate the effect of the support. The identifiable distinctions that we successfully filtered out encompassed:

- the sectors, to filter out sectoral trends;
- years of operation, to filter out the differences in the lifecycles of the enterprises;
- total assets and number of employees to take into consideration the utilization of Production Factors (e.g. the enterprise is using more labour or capital in the production);
- net sales to filter out the size differences;
- net sales and number of employees to control for the differences in labour productivity;
- profit before taxes to filter out the differences in profitability.

²⁰ For the detailed description of the construction of the enterprise data, please see Annex II.

For the start-ups supported by KIC, we concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls' was not significant for their revenues (t-statistics is smaller than 1.96, i.e. not significant at the most commonly used 5% significance level), at least in this short run. This finding is demonstrated in the following table:

Table 5: Results of the analysis for the variable; Growth of net sales (2017- 2021)

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat ²¹
Growth of net sales (2017-2021)	162 564	57 281	105 282	1.02

This means that the support did not create extra revenues to the supported enterprises. The reason behind this can be that not enough time has passed since the support to realise the impacts. Literature on this topic often concludes, that research and innovation support to enterprises does not have positive impacts in the short run. The reason behind this, is that the enterprises receiving these types of support are often use a significant part of their resources (financial and human) to implement R&I investments and have less focus on their core activities (see e.g. E&Y, Equinox, Multicontact (2020)). But in the long run these types of support have sustainable positive effects on revenues and profitability.

KIC's acceleration and business creation support programs predominantly address SEED level assistance, targeting (pre)seed-funded start-ups with prototypes or innovative solutions that are not yet present in the market or have limited sales.²² Furthermore, a considerable portion of the supported start-ups navigates through the scaling-up phase, a critical and dynamic period in their life cycle. On average, it takes around four years from the inception of EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) support at the seed stage to the commencement of revenue generation. For instance, if a start-up received support from EIT Food in 2018, coinciding with the initiation of KIC's support for start-ups, the revenues would only materialize at the current time.

In the context of start-ups engaged in the development of novel food products or proteins, adherence to market regulations is of utmost importance. This is because the introduction of innovative products in the food sector is subject to various regulatory frameworks and standards imposed by governing bodies. These regulations ensure the safety, quality, and compliance of new food items with established guidelines. For start-ups navigating through the regulatory landscape is an integral part of their business strategy. It involves obtaining approvals, certifications, and meeting specific requirements set by regulatory authorities. The regulatory process can be intricate and time-consuming, adding a layer of complexity to the development and market entry of these innovative food solutions thus creating barriers for sales and revenue generation. In summary, it's clear that EIT Food support had differing impacts on the revenue growth of various startups. Nevertheless, the survey results also indicate that the majority of startups witnessed either no impact or only minor influences, underscoring the need for a reevaluation of EIT Food's start-up support approach. While the distribution of responses is not uniform, there is a call for greater efforts to ensure a higher level of effectiveness in providing support to relevant start-ups to promote a more competitive startup ecosystem within the food sector.

²¹ The t-statistic, a crucial statistical measure, operates inversely to the p-value in hypothesis testing. The magnitude of the t-value reflects the strength of the relationship being analyzed. The larger the t-value, the more significant the relationship is considered to be. Importantly, the t-statistic corresponds to a specific p-value, a measure of statistical significance, which quantifies the probability of observing such a t-value by random chance alone.

For instance, a commonly used threshold in hypothesis testing is a p-value of 0.05. In this context, a t-statistic of 1.96 corresponds to a 5% significance level. This implies that if the calculated t-statistic exceeds 1.96, the observed relationship is deemed statistically significant at the 5% significance level, meaning that the likelihood of obtaining such results due to random variation is less than 5%.

²² [2023 CATALOGUE OF EIT KICS BUSINESS CREATION \(BC\) PROGRAMMES](#)

Number and revenue of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KICs trading 3 years after KIC support ceased

Deloitte compared the survival rates of the supported and the control enterprises. Among the identified 45 start-ups, 38 remained active, reflecting an 84% survival rate. In contrast, the control group, despite having a population more than 20 times larger, experienced only 7 start-ups ceasing their operations, resulting in a significantly higher 98% survival rate. While the EIT-Food start-ups exhibit a lower survival rate in comparison, it's important to consider the substantial difference in sample sizes and contextual factors while interpreting these results.

Table 6: Differences between the survival rate of supported and control start-ups

	Food #	Food %	Control #	Control %
Active	38	84%	956	98%
Out of Business	7	16%	19	2%
SUM	45	100%	975	100%

In addition, Deloitte conducted a binary (logit) regression on the survival of the start-ups and their relation to different variables, especially being supported by the KIC, to control for the other parameters and differences in the treated and the control enterprises. The result of the regression was the following:

Pseudo R^2 ²³ = 0.1382

Table 7: Results of the binary (logit) regression analysis for all implemented variables

Variable	Coefficient	P> z
KIC support	-1.22***	0.000

*** 1% significance level.

The analysis indicates that start-ups supported by the KIC exhibit a notably reduced survival rate compared to the control group at every acceptable significance level. Moreover, specific sectors, such as finance and services, display elevated rates of closure (please find the detailed analysis in Annex III). This result is even more valid, knowing that the control group contained similar enterprises in terms of:

- the sectors, to filter out sectoral trends;
- years of operation, to filter out the differences in the lifecycles of the enterprises;
- total assets and number of employees to take into consideration the utilization of Production Factors (e.g. the enterprise is using more labour or capital in the production);
- net sales to filter out the size differences;
- net sales and number of employees to control for the differences in labour productivity;
- profit before taxes to filter out the differences in profitability.

²³ Pseudo-R-squared values are used when the outcome variable is nominal or ordinal such that the coefficient of determination R^2 cannot be applied as a measure for goodness-of-fit. The model estimates from a logistic regression are maximum likelihood estimates arrived at through an iterative process. These are "pseudo" R-squareds ranging from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating better model fit.

However, it is worth to note, that we could not control for an important factor: the level of innovative activities and research in the enterprises, which can influence the chances of survival significantly. This means that the discrepancy in survival rates might be attributed (at least to a certain level) to the heightened reliance of EIT KIC-supported start-ups on innovation-driven activities. This increased dependency potentially amplified their risk exposure compared to the control enterprises, potentially contributing to the observed differences in survival rates. To understand the context better, please find below a short summary of the phenomenon.

The term "valley of death" in the context of start-ups typically refers to a critical phase in their development, characterized by high risk and uncertainty. This phase often occurs between the initial stages of seed funding and the generation of significant revenues.²⁴ Many start-ups struggle during this period due to various challenges, including resource constraints, market uncertainties, and the need for additional funding.²⁵

In their study about entrepreneurship and innovation in the age of digital transformation, Daniel Keogh and Daniel K.N. Johnson (2021) analyzed the longevity and success of start-ups with econometric methods. Their results confirmed that food companies are more likely to fail than other start-ups. The longevity of start-ups was explained as a combination of the importance of financial resources and other critical factors such as good leadership, but no answer was given as to why food start-ups are more vulnerable.²⁶ Meinrad Koch (2017) in his thesis about food start-ups, approached the question from an innovation perspective and examined the possible reasons why food start-ups have lower survival rate even in Switzerland, where innovation and funding opportunities are considered ideal for start-ups. His findings confirmed that it is more difficult for food start-ups to find investors, because food investments have slim margins and often involve high fixed costs. Furthermore, innovation in the food industry is very time-consuming and cost-intensive, and production is closely tied to geographical locations - not to mention the difficulties caused by the compliance with extremely strict food law regulations as mentioned earlier. Thereby, Koch stated that food start-ups are in the valley of death ever since their entrepreneurial activities.²⁷

In the case of EIT Food-supported start-ups, it is highlighted that at least some of them was in this aforementioned challenging period. Despite the volatility associated with this phase, EIT Food start-ups demonstrate a survival rate of over 80%, which is a noteworthy accomplishment, at least when compared to some statistics, which indicates that the companies in that phase, can have extremely low survival rates, even around only 10%.

New jobs created in start-ups / scale-ups

Considering the responses collected from the startup survey, Deloitte evaluated the employment impact of the entity's involvement with EIT Food as follows:

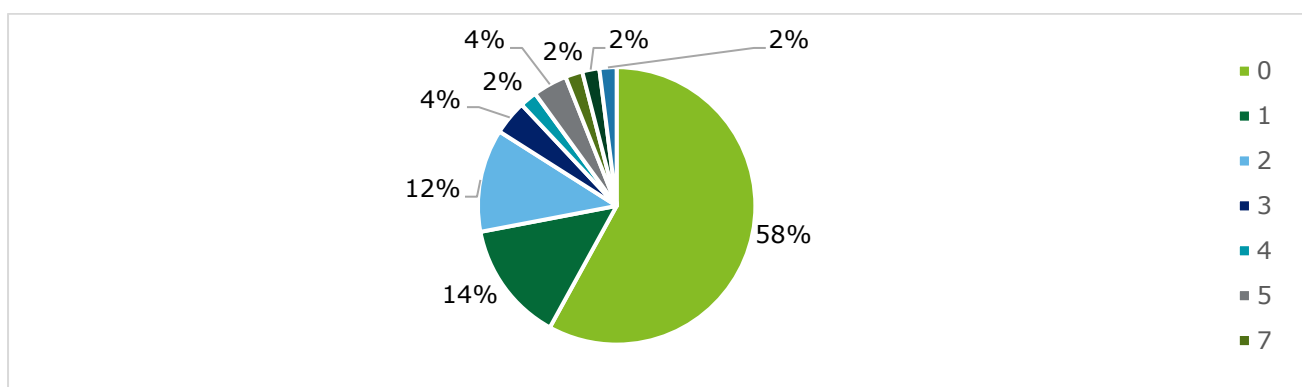
²⁴ [Overcoming the Valley of Death: A New Model for High Technology Startups - ScienceDirect](#)

²⁵ [What Is The Death Valley Curve?](#)

²⁶ [Survival of the funded: Econometric analysis of startup longevity and success](#)

²⁷ [Koch Meinrad Crossing the Valley of Death](#)

Figure 15: Answer to the survey question, how many jobs the entity created as a result of their engagement with EIT Food

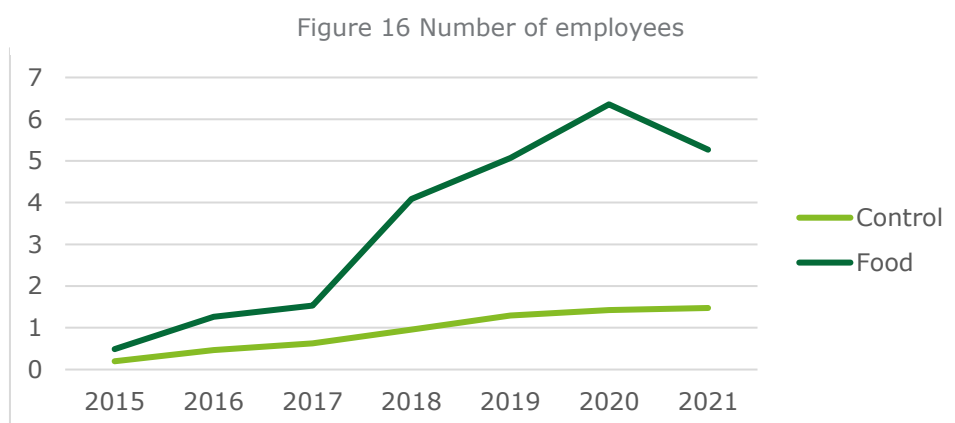


Overall, 58% of all survey participants disclosed that they had not created any employment opportunities resulting from their engagement with EIT Food. It is evident that this is a substantial fraction of entities, who refrained from generating employment as a direct outcome of their collaboration with EIT Food. This may be attributed to a range of factors, including the inherent characteristics of the projects undertaken, the maturity of the startups involved, or the specific industries in which these entities operate.

The survey data also reveals that 42% of the survey respondents reported the creation of at least 1 new job in connection with their participation in EIT Food initiatives, signalling a relatively positive influence on job creation resulting from their involvement with EIT Food. However, it is noteworthy, that this trend might not be universal across all entities.

Impact on employment growth as a result of company being engaged with KICs

Regarding the number of employees, in the analysed period, the supported enterprises created around six new jobs in average, while the controls only one. This is a huge difference, showing that the EIT KIC support has relevant job creating effects (see figure 16).



To validate our findings, Deloitte conducted a counterfactual evaluation mirroring the assessment of revenue impacts. The analysis revealed a substantial difference in employment levels between the KIC supported start-ups and the control group, indicating that the supported enterprises generated an average of three additional jobs compared to the control group. This difference in the number of employees demonstrated statistical significance at a 10% confidence level. Notably, the disparity from the previous observation is attributed to a more stringent methodology, wherein we identified more suitable comparable control enterprises for a comprehensive analysis.

Table 8: Results of the analysis for the variable; Growth of the number of number of employees (2017-2021)

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of the number of employees (2017-2021)	3.95	0.78	3.17*	1.82

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

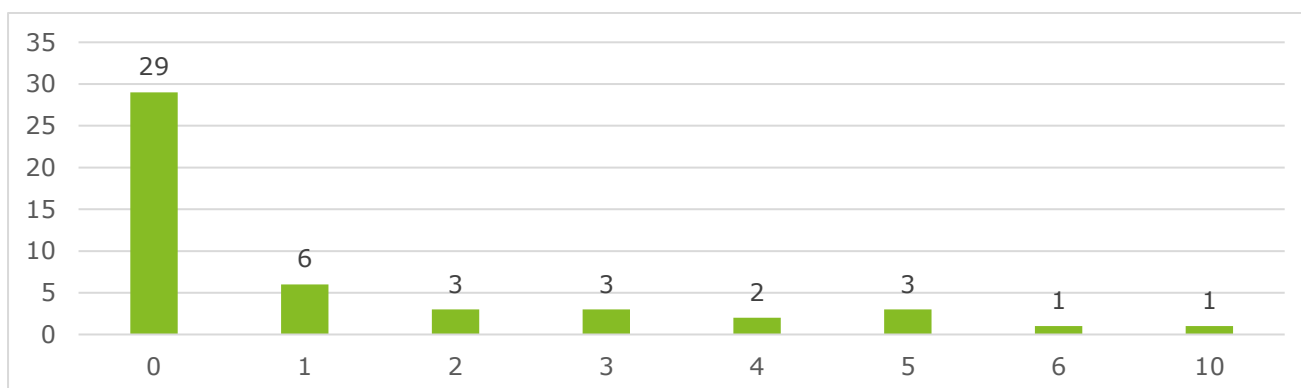
* 10% significance level

Overall, while it is evident that EIT Food's engagement has had a beneficial impact on employment opportunities for a substantial number of the entities involved, it is also apparent that there remain areas for improvement and further development.

Number and type of jobs in existing businesses sustained through innovations

The survey responses reveal that a considerable number of entities did not maintain any jobs as a direct outcome of their involvement with EIT Food. However, there are instances where entities succeeded in preserving jobs, with a smaller percentage achieving the sustainability of a higher number of positions. This variability in job sustainability outcomes is primarily influenced by the fact that a significant number of the respondents consists of start-ups, which are inherently more likely to be generating new jobs rather than preserving existing ones.

Figure 17: Answers to the survey question: how many jobs the entity has sustained by the engagement with EIT Food

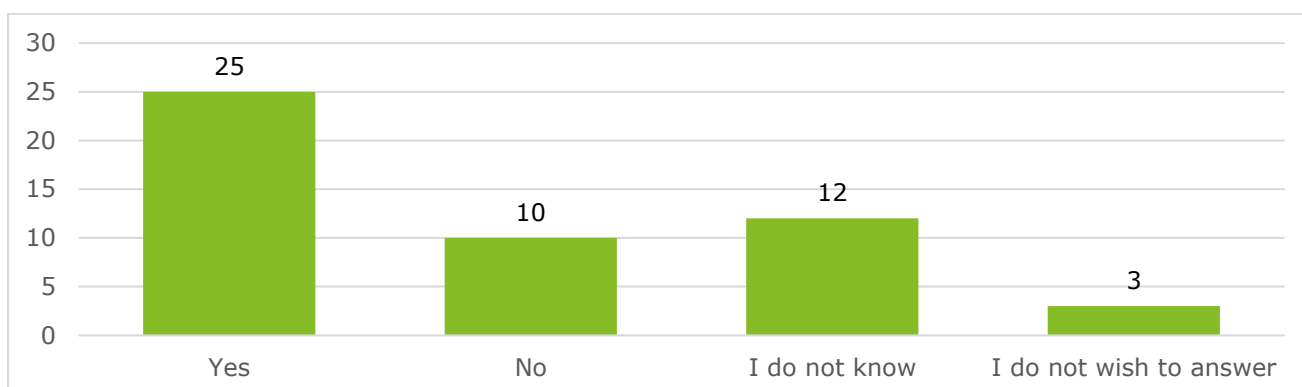


Moreover, this indicator is influenced by various factors, including the specific nature of the industry in which the entities operate, prevailing market conditions, and the tailored support provided by EIT Food. These multifaceted aspects collectively shape the employment impact experienced by the entities engaged with EIT Food.

Number and type of skill gaps and/or skill shortages filled by KIC sector

The data collected during the start-up survey indicates that a significant number of respondents (50%) believe that their involvement with EIT Food has contributed to filling skill gaps and/or skill shortages. However, a lower, but still a significant number (20%) of respondents claimed that their involvement with the KIC did not help to fill skill gaps and/or skill shortages. Furthermore, 23% of respondents asserted that they don't know whether their engagement with EIT Food contributed to fill their skill gaps, while 3% did not wish to answer.

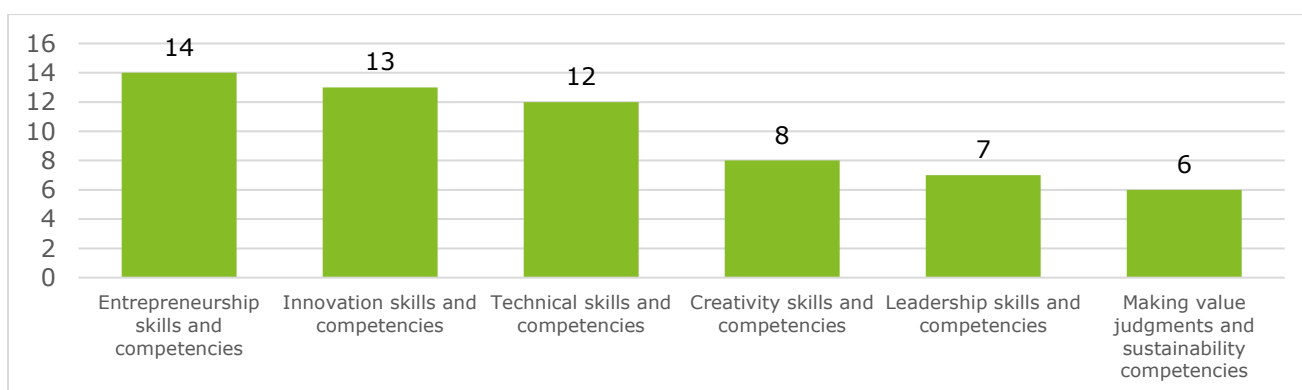
Figure 18: Referring to the jobs that you have reported in the previous section, would you say that any of them helped fill skill gaps and/or skill shortages



In the context of addressing skill gaps and shortages through engagement with EIT Food, entrepreneurship skills and competencies stand out, as a total of 14 respondents highlighted their positive impact in this regard. Following closely are innovation skills and competencies, which were recognised by 13 respondents for their significant contribution. Additionally, technical skills and competencies also deserve attention, as they were mentioned by 12 respondents.

EIT Food has also focused on fostering creativity skills and competencies, as indicated by 8 respondents who have acknowledged their positive influence. Similarly, leadership skills and competencies have been effectively addressed, with 7 respondents recognizing their impact. Moreover, there has been an effort to foster value judgment and sustainability competencies, which have still played a role in addressing skill gaps, as noted by 6 respondents who have recognized their contribution.

Figure 19: Which skill gaps or skill shortages were addressed as a result of your engagement with EIT Food



The data analysis reveals that EIT Food's engagement has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in bridging skill gaps associated with entrepreneurship, innovation, and technical expertise, indicating comprehensive approach to mitigating diverse dimensions of skill shortages within the sector. Additionally, the involvement with EIT Food has also proven beneficial to the development of skills relating to creativity, leadership, and sustainability. In summary, the engagement has had a multifaceted impact on enhancing competencies and addressing skill gaps.

Career growth of participants in EIT labelled education

The analysis regarding graduates' highest and current job positions reveals the following observations and trends:

Intern (Part-time): Based on the findings, it is evident that the number of graduates currently occupying intern positions (1) is considerably lower than the number of graduates for whom intern positions represent their highest achieved positions (13). This observation suggests that most of the graduates may have encountered challenges in securing more stable or advanced roles following the completion of their internships.

Entry-Level Staff: Similarly, the findings suggest that the number of graduates currently holding entry-level positions (9) is less than the number of graduates for whom entry-level positions constitute their highest achieved position (14). This implies that some graduates may have faced difficulties in advancing to more senior or higher-level roles.

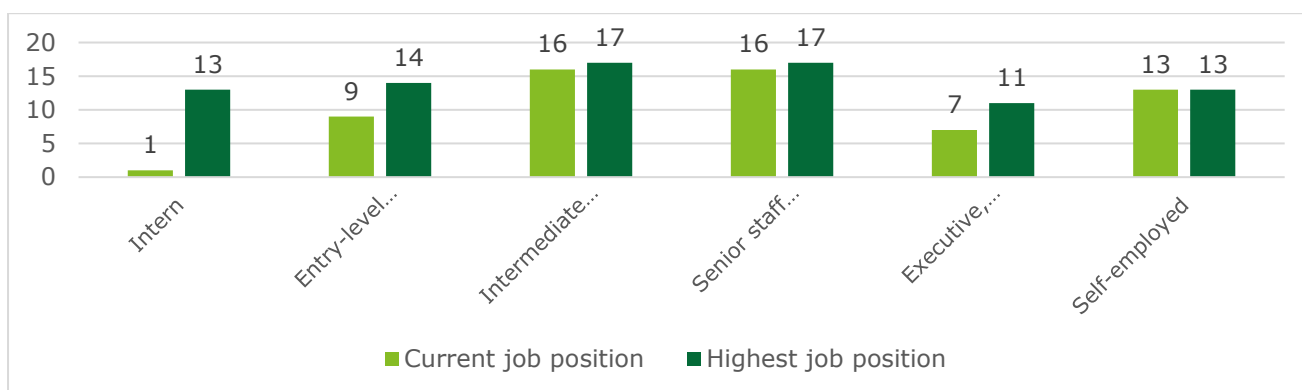
Intermediate Staff (Mid-management): The number of graduates in intermediate positions remains fairly consistent between their highest (17) and current job positions (16), indicating that some individuals have continued to grow within the mid-management level.

Senior Staff (Manager, Senior Manager): A similar trend can be observed in the case of graduates holding senior positions. Specifically, 16 respondents have reported currently occupying senior positions, while 17 have indicated that senior positions represent their highest achieved position. This finding strongly implies that a portion of these graduates has likely progressed to executive levels within organizations or may presently be exploring self-employment opportunities.

Executive, Senior Executive Level: The number of graduates currently holding executive and senior executive level position (7) is smaller than those for whom these positions represent their highest achievement (11), suggesting that many of these graduates might have transitioned to different positions.

Self-Employed: The findings reveal a pattern where an equal number of graduates (13) have reported both currently being self-employed and having self-employment as their highest achieved position. This observation suggests that for many, pursuing entrepreneurial or freelancer endeavours meets their professional aspirations and needs, while others might choose to transition to traditional employment for various reasons or at different stages of their careers.

Figure 20: Answers to the survey questions of graduates highest and current job positions



In summary, these findings reflect the diverse career journeys of graduates, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they have encountered in navigating their respective fields. Graduates in entry-level roles facing challenges in advancing to more senior positions, while mid-management positions have seen a stable presence and growth. Graduates in senior roles and those achieving executive levels indicate a potential shift towards higher responsibilities or exploring self-employment. The equal representation of graduates in self-employment as both their current and highest achieved positions reflects the diverse preferences in pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours or transitioning to traditional employment at different career stages.

Conclusion: The KIC has shown substantial progress in its KPIs, indicating its strong focus and commitment to address agri-food related challenges. However, the EIT's impact on the revenue growth was not significant enough on most start-ups according to the survey results, which indicate the need for a revaluation of EIT

Food's funding approach. Results of the regression analyses showed that the supported enterprises had worse survival rates than the control group, but the achieved rate of 84% can still be considered good given the typical characteristics and challenges of start-ups. Job creation and sustainability have been positively influenced by KIC engagement, though the extent varies. Notably, the KIC's support has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in addressing skill gaps and shortages, particularly in entrepreneurship, innovation, technical expertise, sustainability, creativity, and leadership. Career trajectories of EIT-labelled education programmes participants demonstrate diverse transitions, with trends indicating challenges and opportunities of graduates moving from internships to more advanced roles. Additionally, EIT Food's initiatives are making positive strides in various aspects, demonstrating its commitment to fostering sustainability, innovation, and economic growth in the food sector.

5.5. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC's activities related to the EU global challenges:

Strengths
EIT Food employs a systemic approach to innovation that goes beyond technology, encompassing policy, finance, education, and engagement. This comprehensive strategy maximizes the potential for holistic and sustainable solutions.
EIT Food fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth for comprehensive solutions in the food sector to advance the European Union's objectives by contributing to the sustainable growth of the European society and the safeguard of the environment.
Through Cross-KIC activities and the knowledge triangle, the EIT Food can successfully promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU's strategic objectives including the promotion of education, job creation and global cooperation. The EIT's assistance ranges from the individual to the international level through fostering the engagement of local players, support startups and facilitate cooperation.
The KIC's activities make a significant contribution to addressing long and short-term societal challenges related to the food system, sustainability, and nutrition by engaging in initiatives like EU Skills for the Future, Connecting Food and Great Taste, Zero Waste.
The created Food-based Dietary Guidelines and the 25 new digital solutions achieved great success in improving supply chain efficiency, integrity and transparency thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the KIC's main targets; food safety and security.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Deficiencies in structured data availability regarding societal impact indicators.	To ensure the acquisition of necessary data for establishing valid and consistent conclusions, a more systematic approach is imperative during the data collection phase, incl. for impact data. It is crucial for the KIC to establish a robust mechanism for impact measurement and data collection to address the challenge of drawing precise conclusions regarding indicator performance due to the limited availability of supporting data.

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Unbalanced knowledge triangle integration within Business Creation area	The KIC should enhance support for startups in Business Creation area by incorporating KAVAs with educational activities and KPIs in Marketed Innovations (EITHE02.1). This entails a stronger emphasis on product commercialization efforts.
Insufficient impact of the promotion of healthier dietary choices	Significant efforts needed to encourage and promote healthy dietary choices as the previous contribution of KIC activities were not effective enough according to the majority of respondents.
The number of new products launched with EIT Food support using revalorized &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams (10) and number of EIT Food-supported products on the market derived from alternative resources (12) are projected to fall short of the initially set 2024 targets (15 for each category)	To address the shortfall, it is advised to place a greater emphasis on improving the environmental impact of the agri-food system.
Involvement of start-ups is not sufficient enough	Despite the fact that many start-ups reported through the survey a strong to medium impact in the engagement fields, enhanced impact and broader participation, addressing societal challenges in most of the KIC's initiatives is recommended. Overall, more time is needed for start-ups to create significant impact in their fields, that is measurable on a macro level.
EIT Food support did not have impact on start-up revenue growth, according to the majority of respondents.	A revaluation of EIT Food's adaptation of the start-ups' main challenges is needed. There is a disparity between the market data and start-ups' survey responses, thus a more focused communication approach is needed towards the supported start-ups to better explain the nature of the KIC support.

6. EU added value and relevance with regard to the objectives of the EIT

6.1. European added value

Indicator: The KIC has created a significant European added value with respect to building a sustainable innovation ecosystem through knowledge triangle integration, and as a result has developed concrete solutions to societal challenge it addresses as foreseen in the original proposal.

The Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) operating within the framework of EIT Food has made significant strides in creating European added value, particularly with regard to building a sustainable innovation ecosystem through knowledge triangle integration. This value is evident in the KIC's proactive approach to fostering synergies between the academic, business, and research sectors, all of which are essential components of the Knowledge Triangle. The KIC's original proposal emphasized the importance of this cooperation as a framework for active and sustainable collaboration across the Knowledge Triangle, which is a cornerstone for addressing societal challenges.

To achieve its objectives, EIT Food developed an integrated approach under the banner of "FoodConnects," which sought to ensure the full integration of education, innovation, and business creation within an

entrepreneurship-driven Knowledge Triangle. This approach was underpinned by the principle of Knowledge Triangle integration, aiming to foster long-term relationships based on knowledge and innovation between industry, educators, and researchers. This has contributed significantly to aligning the KIC's activities with the original proposal's vision.

Moreover, EIT Food has systematically addressed societal challenges within the context of its strategic agenda. It has identified and mobilized efforts around "Grand Challenges" that necessitate engagement across all segments of the Knowledge Triangle. These challenges are pivotal to accelerating the transformation of the European food system. Furthermore, the KIC has been active in expanding and enhancing its Rising Food Stars Association, aligning high-potential start-ups with industry and academic partners across the Knowledge Triangle, reinforcing its commitment to integrated collaboration.

EIT Food's performance is reflective of its dedication to Knowledge Triangle Integration, particularly in the education portfolio. The KIC has strived to adhere to the principles set out in the original proposal, and it has seen success in achieving strategic objectives. EIT Food's performance evaluations indicate commendable outcomes in education, innovation, and research areas. Furthermore, it has demonstrated an ability to address the overarching societal challenge of building a resilient and sustainable food system that aligns with the objectives of Europe 2020 and its climate, energy, employment, innovation, and education targets.

Conclusion: EIT Food, guided by its original proposal and strategic agenda, has effectively created a significant European added value by promoting the Knowledge Triangle Integration. The KIC has developed concrete solutions to societal challenges, particularly in the domain of food sustainability, by fostering collaboration and innovation across the academic, business, and research sectors. Its efforts align with European priorities, and its achievements reflect its commitment to transforming the European food system.

6.2. Alignment with and Relevance to the EIT objectives

Indicator: All KIC's activities have been fully aligned with and relevant to the EIT objectives as defined in EIT legislative framework.

The original legislative objective anchored in the 2008 EIT Regulation was defined as follows²⁸: "The EIT's objective is to contribute to sustainable European economic growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the Member States and the Community. It shall do this by promoting and integrating higher education, research, and innovation of the highest standards." This Regulation was amended in 2021 by Regulation (EU) 2021/819 which set out a similar objective: "The EIT's mission is to contribute to sustainable Union economic growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the Union and Member States to address major challenges faced by society. It shall do this by promoting synergies, integration and cooperation among higher education, research, and innovation of the highest standards, including by fostering entrepreneurship, thereby strengthening the innovation ecosystems across the Union in an open and transparent manner"²⁹.

Regulation (EU) 2021/819³⁰ outlines a comprehensive set of responsibilities for the KICs. These responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities aimed at promoting innovation and research with European added value. Some of the key roles include facilitating the creation of innovative startups and businesses, integrating higher education and research to achieve critical mass and excellence, and disseminating research results. KICs are also entrusted with conducting research in areas of economic, environmental, and societal significance, promoting education and training at various levels, and supporting the integration of higher education institutions into innovation value chains. Additionally, KICs are expected to disseminate best practices in innovation, provide support for regional innovation strategies, seek synergies with other European Union programmes, mobilize funding from both public and private sources, and provide information on research and innovation outcomes as well as intellectual property rights.

²⁸ Article 3, 2008 EIT Regulation

²⁹ Article 3, 2021 EIT Regulation

³⁰ Article 3, 2021 EIT Regulation

Furthermore, as established by Regulation (EU) 2021/819³¹, the KICs shall adhere to specific governance and operational principles, including establishing transparent governance arrangements which reflect the knowledge triangle of higher education, research, and innovation; promoting openness through clear accession and exit criteria for potential partner organizations across the EU. Moreover, KICs are required to establish internal rules, such as codes of conduct, to ensure transparency and open functioning, develop and execute business plans, and formulate strategies to achieve financial sustainability³². These responsibilities aim to ensure that KICs operate in a structured and accountable manner while fostering collaboration and innovation across the EU.

The EIT Strategic Agenda (SIA)³³ highlights the pivotal role of KICs in advancing the educational mission of the EIT. Specifically, KICs are expected to take a leadership role in promoting and implementing this mission. The EIT actively supports this objective by, among other things, monitoring the quality and consistent implementation of EIT-labelled degrees across KICs. This effort aims to enhance the national and international recognition and reputation of qualifications provided with the EIT label, ultimately increasing their global appeal and attractiveness. In doing so, the EIT seeks to bolster the employability of graduates while providing a valuable platform for international collaboration in the field of education and innovation.

In 2021, EIT Food adopted a revised and updated Strategic Agenda for the period 2021-2027, which introduces an Impact Framework that connects their Strategic Objectives and Partner Network to four significant Impact Goals, as follows³⁴:

- 1) Improvement in conditions for enhanced public trust in the food system;
- 2) Reduction in relative to risk of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors;
- 3) Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food Systems;
- 4) Enabling transition to a circular & sustainable economy.

By pursuing these goals, EIT Food aims to have a positive impact on health, economic potential, and the environment while contributing to the overarching sustainability and green initiatives of the EU and the international community at the same time. These Impact Goals also align with broader global objectives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the European Union's Green Deal, and the Farm to Fork strategy.

According to the EIT Single Programming Document of 2021-2023³⁵, EIT Food's overarching goal is to provide innovative products, services, and new technologies that promote a healthier lifestyle for all European citizens. In pursuing this mission, EIT Food shall align with the EU's Food 2030 strategy, contributing to the broader efforts aimed at enhancing the sustainability and resilience of Europe's food systems while addressing critical challenges related to agriculture, sustainability, and urban development. Furthermore, EIT also encourages EIT Food to seek synergies and foster complementarities with other key initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) and the European Urban Initiative (EUI).

Based on the 2021-2022 Business Plan³⁶, EIT Food aims to act as a catalyst in revolutionizing food production, distribution, and consumption across the EU, while simultaneously increasing the value of the food ecosystem's value to European society. Therefore, EIT Food focuses on collaborating with trusted industry, education, and research partners, all while actively involving and engaging citizens.

³¹ Article 3, 2021 EIT Regulation

³² Article 3, 2021 EIT Regulation

³³ 2023 Strategic Innovation Agenda

³⁴ 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda

³⁵ EIT SPD 2021-2023

³⁶ 2021-2022 Business Plan

Furthermore, as stated in the 2023-2025 Business Plan³⁷, EIT Food aims to achieve its overarching goal to solidify its role as a preferred partner for organizations committed to making a substantial impact by focusing on three core mission delivery programs:

- 1) Healthier Lives through Food;
- 2) Net Zero Food System;
- 3) Fully transparent, resilient & fair food system.

The legislative framework of the EIT underscores the crucial role of promoting innovation, education, and entrepreneurship in addressing significant societal challenges. EIT Food's commitment to the EIT's legislative framework underscores its dedication to promoting critical tools to address pressing societal challenges. While EIT Food's activities align with these fundamental EIT objectives, some shortcomings need to be addressed. EIT Food's aspirations and activities have sometimes fallen short of achieving their KPIs. Despite a strong focus on innovation projects, deep demonstrations, education programs, and business creation, EIT Food faces challenges in fully realizing the EIT's vision for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. However, EIT Food's endeavours to strengthen regional ecosystems through the RIS are well-aligned with the EIT's goal of supporting innovation in regions with modest innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, EIT Food's dedication to addressing climate challenges, promoting sustainable practices, and engaging stakeholders perfectly resonates with the EIT's commitment to tackling critical societal issues. EIT Food's emphasis on education, capacity building, and cross-KIC collaboration also mirrors the EIT's broader focus on enhancing human capital and encouraging interdisciplinary cooperation.

Conclusion: All the EIT Food’s activities as outlined above, and the activities detailed in the BPs from previous years appear to be closely aligned with and relevant to the objectives set forth in the EIT legislative framework. However, the goals and results of the cross-KIC thematic innovation activity are not consistent in such fields like innovation and education as they face challenges in meeting certain KPIs. Despite these challenges, the KIC contributes significantly to regional empowerment, sustainability, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

6.3. Alignment with the EIT RIS Guidance

Indicator: KIC RIS activities have been fully aligned with the EIT RIS Guidance note 2018-2020 and RIS Implementation Framework (2022-2027)

Apart from the EIT’s objectives, the EIT Food is required to conduct its activities fully in line with the EIT RIS Guidance Note (2018-2020) and the RIS Implementation Framework (2022-2027).

EIT Guidance note (2018-2020)

Based on the EIT RIS Guidance note 2018-2020, the EIT RIS objective was set out to contribute to enhancing the innovation capacity of the countries and regions that are modest and moderate innovators by transferring KIC good practice of the KTI. While a certain level of flexibility has been allowed, each KIC was expected to work with relevant local players, incorporate them in the KIC ecosystem and provide them with mentoring to promote and implement KTI in RIS regions. The KIC-specific EIT RIS Strategy 2018-2020 should thus facilitate the delivery of such outcomes while reflecting the local needs. The two expected action lines are presented in the following table:

Table 9: Action lines of the EIT RIS Guidance note 2018-2020

Action line	Description of activities
Action line I: Engage local	Specific activities have included:

³⁷ 2023-2025 Business Plan

Action line	Description of activities
players in KIC activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education: setting up EIT RIS scholarship programs for KIC's educational programs, developing internship programs for graduates in EIT RIS countries in accordance with the KTI model (e.g., in business) etc. • Entrepreneurship: e.g., establishing partnerships with local business and innovation hubs and supporting start-up creation etc. • Innovation and Research: involving local start-ups in technology and know-how transfer, involve researchers from the EIT RIS countries in KIC innovation projects. <p>KIC and EIT RIS participants were required to seek other sources of funding and be selected in a transparent manner. All activities should have received broad publicity at local level by, e.g., raising awareness of the EIT Community brand and its KTI model.</p>
Action line II: Mobilize, interlink and internationalize national / regional networks	<p>KIC had to work with KT stakeholders at national level to raise awareness and share best practices from the KTI model to achieve fully-fledged KTI-based innovation ecosystems.</p> <p>KIC were obligated to establish collaborations with local entities functioning as EIT Hubs. These have ensured the active involvement of local KT actors and provided expertise to the relevant national, regional and local authorities. Other existing information channels, offices, platforms and key experts had to be leveraged as well to ensure efficient exchange of information and best practices, explore synergies and further promote the visibility of the EIT Community. Specific activities included stakeholder events, joint projects and pilots with all three sides of the local KT, as well as policy papers, etc.</p>

Specific EIT RIS KPIs were expected to be introduced by the KIC to monitor progress across the following:

- number of ventures from the EIT RIS countries supported by the KIC;
- number of students from the EIT RIS countries;
- new collaborations (projects, initiatives, programmes) between KT actors³⁸;
- number of entities from the EIT RIS countries joining the KICs as partners in accordance with the EIT RIS Strategies.

Additionally, the RIS Guidance note 2018-2020 envisaged increasing the visibility of the EIT RIS and raising awareness and interest among relevant stakeholders (e.g., via a dedicated EIT RIS section on the KIC's website, dissemination of information material, organizing joint awareness days, workshops and events), as well as close collaboration between the KIC and EIT in the EIT RIS implementation, including a bi-annual brief activity update. A special focus had to be placed on leveraging synergies and efficiency gains for RIS countries and regions through their Smart Specialization Strategies (S3), matched with the KIC's focus areas.

RIS Implementation Framework (2021-2027)

The RIS Implementation Framework (2021-2027) mandates the incorporation of EIT RIS (Regional Innovation Scheme) as an integral part of EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities' (KIC) multiannual strategies. The primary goal is to strengthen innovation ecosystems in moderate and modest innovating countries and regions by disseminating the Knowledge Triangle Integration (KTI) approach. Specific KIC activities within the framework aim to enhance local innovation capacities, attract new partners, bridge

connections with regional smart specialization strategies (RIS3s), and secure additional private and public funding, with a focus on European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The impact of these activities will be assessed based on indicators such as the involvement of organizations and universities from RIS regions in KIC activities, support for start-ups and SMEs in these regions, and the implementation and impact of innovation, education, and business creation projects. The EIT Impact Framework also introduces four EIT RIS-specific indicators related to funding, establishment of hubs, KIC partners, and the coverage of innovation ecosystems. To achieve these objectives, KIC are encouraged to align with European initiatives and strategies, especially focusing on regions lacking KIC representation. Additionally, gender balance, synergy with other programs like RIS3 and ESIF, increased visibility, shared learning, and collaboration within the EIT Community are emphasized. Capacity-building activities should complement the new EIT initiative supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in higher education, and annual stock-taking will be performed by the EIT RIS Advisory Group.

Main observations based on the desk research and the interviews

The general action plan of EIT Food is built in line with the EIT RIS Guidance note 2018-2020 and takes into account the aspects specified in the RIS Implementation Framework (2022-2027). EIT Food's activities were closely aligned with the S3 of the targeted RIS countries, complementing the efforts of regional S3 implementation agencies, as described in the 2021-2022 Business Plan. Furthermore, EIT Food RIS has been seamlessly integrated into EIT Food's core activities, becoming an essential component of its KTI portfolio. This integration ensures the active promotion of the innovation agenda within local ecosystems. Additionally, RIS Hubs independently craft regional action plans, aligning with local requirements, while adhering to an overarching planning framework supervised by key EIT Food executives, particularly the CLC directors responsible for RIS regions. This strategic approach ensures that regional efforts are well-coordinated and aligned with EIT Food's broader objectives while allowing for flexibility and customization to address specific local challenges and opportunities.

In accordance with the minimum standards and guiding principles set forth by the EIT RIS Hub, EIT Food RIS is actively strengthening its network of Hubs, which comprised 20 Hubs in 2023 exceeding the target (17) set out in Strategic Agenda 2021-2027.. These hubs, considered members of the EIT Community, play a pivotal role in connecting with regional stakeholders, fostering knowledge exchange, and facilitating the successful execution of projects in alignment with EIT Food's strategic objectives, thus driving innovation and impact in the food sector.

In 2022, EIT Food's extensive portfolio included over 200 activities and events that encompassed a range of capacity-building workshops, which successfully attracted nearly 6,000 participants based on the KIC report PerSe 2022. 17 RIS Policy Council members harnessed the KTI to enhance national and regional innovation ecosystems. In 2021, 29 participants, and in 2022, 19 representatives from the public sector, actively engaged in the EIT Food Government Executive Academy, contributing to the development of S3. Furthermore, more than 600 farmers received training on regenerative practices between 2021 and 2022, and 45 farmers joined the advisory program each year, actively participating in efforts to promote Regenerative Agriculture (RAR). This initiative also led to the development of the Regenerative Agriculture Manual.

Conclusion: Based on our observations and the results summarized per KPIs, the KIC's RIS activities are closely aligned with the EIT RIS Guidance note 2018-2020, EIT RIS Implementation Framework and the Business Plans. It is important to note that the KIC is actively strengthening its network of RIS Hubs including 20 Hubs in 2023 exceeding the target set out in Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 and over 200 activities and events attracting more than 6,000 participants in 2022. The Hubs play an essential role in encouraging the connection with regional stakeholders, fostering knowledge exchange, and facilitating the successful execution of projects in alignment with EIT Food's strategic objectives, thereby driving innovation and impact in the food sector.

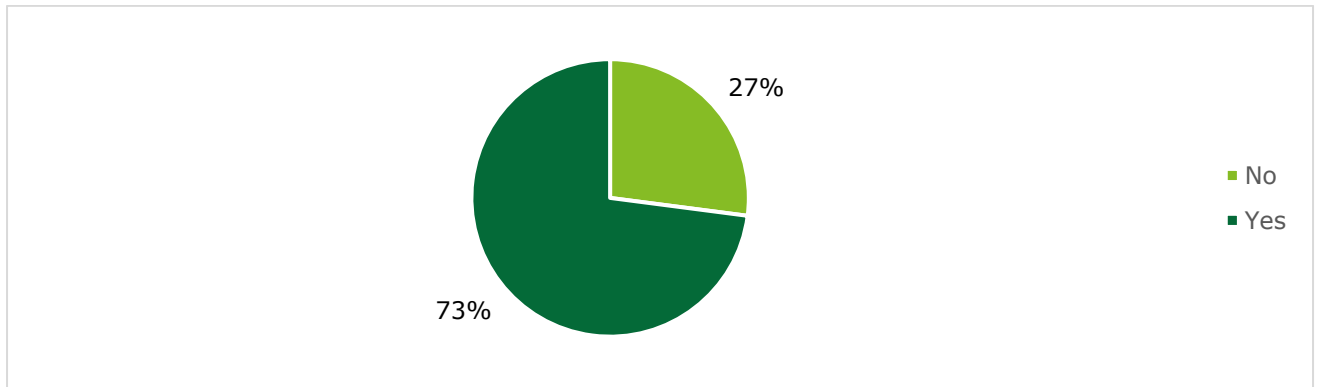
6.4. Medium-term KPIs

Indicator: KIC has made evidenced progress against the following KPIs (incl. impact KPIs as per definitions provided in the EIT Impact Framework – Medium term KPIs EIT Food)

Number and percentage of KIC Label graduates employed

The following figure demonstrates the ratio of the graduates currently employed:

Figure 21: Answers to the survey question whether a graduate is currently employed.



According to the survey results, 73% of the respondents are currently employed, implying that a significant portion of graduates are employed. A high percentage of employment can indicate that the graduates have been successful in finding job opportunities in their respective fields.

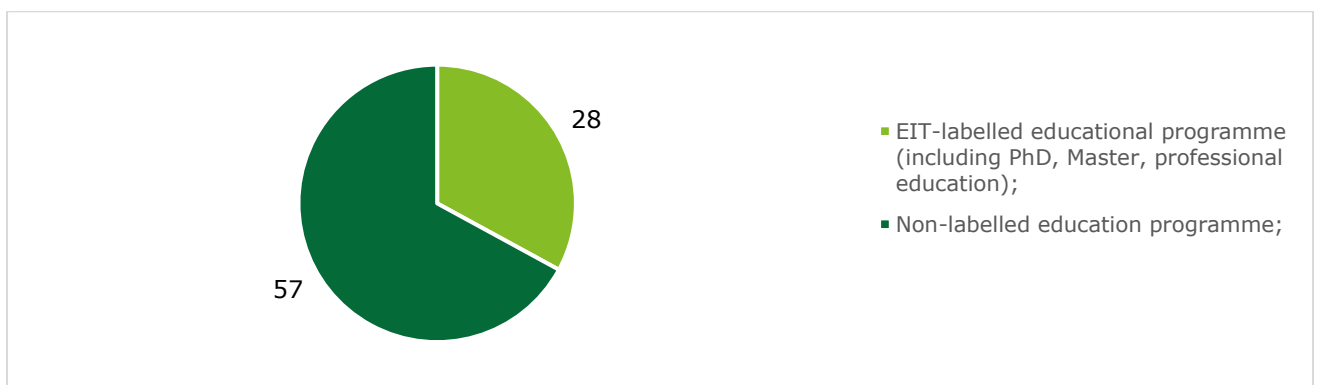
On the other hand, 27% of graduates indicated that they are presently not employed. This could be due to several reasons, including graduates in the lookout for new job opportunities, opting for a deliberate break, or they encounter challenges in finding suitable job opportunities while concurrently pursuing further education.

Overall, a 73% employment rate among graduates is quite robust and suggests that a significant portion of them have achieved success in entering the job market. It's important to consider that this employment rate can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the overall conditions of the job market, the specific fields of study pursued by the graduates, and the geographical locations in which they are seeking employment.

Number and percentage of students and graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs who joined start-ups

The following graph demonstrates the ratio of respondents participating in EIT-labelled educational programs:

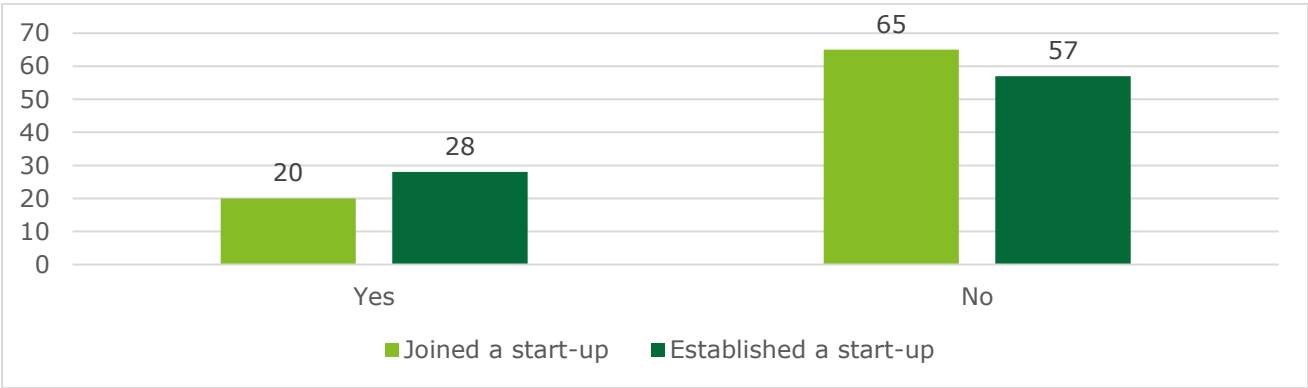
Figure 22: Survey results regarding the type of EIT Food educational program(s) the students have participated in among all respondents



The survey results show that only 33% of respondents participated in EIT-labelled programs. When asked to validate these findings during the 2nd validation interview, EIT Food claimed that compared to the number of graduates, this ratio is relatively high, as around 40 to 50 graduates are generated each year.

Furthermore, in our student survey, we also asked students and graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs to indicate whether they joined or established a start-up based on their experiences.

Figure 23: Survey results on whether EIT Food graduates joined or established a start-up



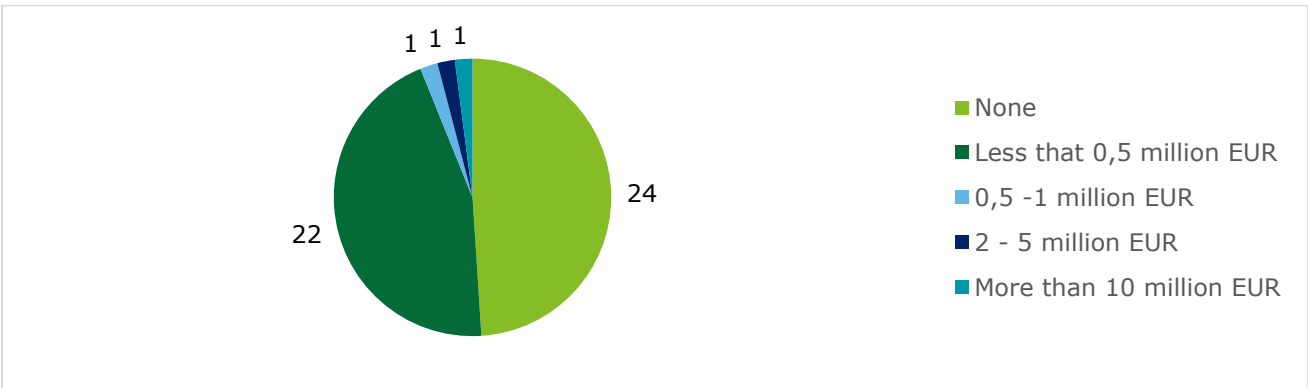
Of the responders, 20 individuals have chosen to join existing start-up companies. This indicates that a relatively small portion of the graduates was interested in working for start-ups rather than pursuing traditional employment. Interestingly, a larger cohort, consisting of 28 respondents has chosen the entrepreneurial path by establishing their own start-up ventures.

The results imply that the majority of respondents decided to opt for alternative career options over working for or founding a start-up, as demonstrated on Figure 23. The choice to either join or establish a start-up can be influenced by numerous factors, including individual aspirations, risk tolerance, prevailing industry dynamics, access to resources, and market opportunities.

Revenue from the innovations launched on the market

The data collected through our start-ups survey indicates a significant divide in the revenue from innovations among start-ups supported by EIT Food. Nearly half (49%) of these start-ups were unable to generate any revenues from innovations developed through their engagements with the KIC. This suggests that a substantial portion of the supported start-ups might have faced challenges in both creating and successfully bringing innovations to the market, hindering their ability to realize profits.

Figure 24: Revenues generated from innovations developed through the organization’s engagement with EIT Food and subsequently launched on the market



On the other hand, 51% of the respondents were successful in creating revenues from innovations. However, this finding is overshadowed by the fact that a great proportion of the respondents (44%) have only been able to generate less than 0.5 million euros in revenue from innovations related to the engagement. Additionally, only one start-up indicated generating more than 10 million euros in revenue from innovations.

While it is promising that over half of the start-ups have been successful in generating revenues from innovations, it is concerning that a substantial portion of them have not realized any revenue from innovation. This could be attributed to several factors, including the early stage of start-ups, the absence of substantial innovation development, or challenges in bringing innovations to market. Addressing these barriers and fostering a supportive ecosystem for innovation commercialization could be crucial in enhancing the success rates of start-ups within the EIT Food network.

Conclusion: Overall, the KIC needs to show further progress in its Medium-term KPIs. Even though a great proportion of KIC label graduates are employed, most of the graduates were reluctant establishing or joining a start-up. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the supported start-ups failed to generate revenues from innovation according to the survey results.

6.5. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC's activities related EU added value and their relevance with regards to the EIT objectives:

Strengths
EIT Food has effectively championed Knowledge Triangle Integration, fostering collaboration and synergy between the academic, business, and research sectors. This approach aligns with EIT's objectives.
EIT Food has adopted a Strategic Agenda with clear Impact Goals aimed at addressing societal challenges related to food sustainability, public health, and environmental impact. These goals demonstrate alignment with broader global initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the European Union's Green Deal.
EIT Food demonstrates a commitment to collaboration by actively involving trusted industry, education, and research partners, along with engaging citizens. KIC's dedication to creating innovative products, services, and technologies for healthier living aligns with the EU's priorities and contributes to enhancing the sustainability and resilience of Europe's food systems.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Inconsistent Achievement of KPIs	Conduct a comprehensive review of KPIs with EIT and consider revising them to be more realistic and aligned with specific capabilities and economic environment.
Stakeholder Engagement	Maintain formal mechanisms for continuous engagement with stakeholders, such as regular meetings, feedback sessions, and collaborative projects. This will help facilitate stronger partnerships and further enhance KIC's effectiveness in achieving shared objectives.

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Low percentage of graduates from EIT-labelled programs who joined or established start-ups	The KIC should prioritize promoting entrepreneurship through targeted programs, showcasing success stories, providing resources, offering tailored support, and fostering stronger industry connections. These measures will encourage more graduates to consider and pursue start-up opportunities, ultimately diversifying their career choices and improving the overall success rates of start-ups within the EIT Food network.

7. Achievement of KIC's own objectives

7.1. 7-year Strategic Agenda objectives and expected results

Indicator: The KIC is on track to achieve its 7-year Strategic Agenda objectives and expected results in line with its initial strategic objectives. Any deviation from the Strategic Agenda has been justified, approved by the EIT and has led to maximizing impact.

EIT Food's **Strategic Objectives** (SOs), as determined in the Proposal for the EIT and the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda are the following:

1. Overcoming low consumer trust:
 - SO1.1: Develop citizen participation across the food supply network.
 - SO1.2: Develop a new communication culture to reach out to EU citizens.
2. Creating consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition:
 - SO2.1: Informed consumer choice for nutrition and health.
 - SO2.2: A superior nutritional composition through collaborative innovation.
 - SO2.3: Convenient individualization at point of consumption.
3. Building a consumer-centric connected food system:
 - SO3.1: Provide a fully integrated digital supply network.
 - SO3.2: Improve food system transparency and integrity.
4. Enhancing sustainability through resource stewardship:
 - SO4.1: Tackle hotspots in the environmental footprint.
 - SO4.2: Increase market penetration of ingredients from sustainable, alternative sources.
 - SO4.3: Drive circular excellence by valorising side streams.
5. Educating to engage, innovate and advance:
 - SO5.1: Demand-driven higher education for students and professionals.
 - SO5.2: Educational support of entrepreneurs for Europe.
 - SO5.3: Building innovation capacity within HEIs.
6. Catalysing food entrepreneurship and innovation.

While EIT Food possesses a valuable combination of experience, a proven track record, extensive knowledge, a broad network, effective programs, and a wide reach, meeting the 2027 targets and making a significant contribution to the EIT SIA 2021-2027 necessitates a more ambitious approach. The EIT SIA 2021-2027 emphasizes alignment targets for SOs with the following key focus areas:

- Enhancing the impact of the KICs and fostering knowledge triangle integration,
- Reinforcing sustainable innovation ecosystems throughout Europe,
- Facilitating the introduction of innovative solutions to address global challenges,
- Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship through enhanced education,
- Amplifying the innovation capacity of higher education institutions by encouraging institutional change, and

- Expanding the regional reach of the EIT to address regional disparities in innovation capacity across the EU.

These aligning targets emphasize the importance of enhancing consumer trust, promoting sustainability, driving innovation, and advancing entrepreneurship in the food sector across Europe.

Table 10: KIC's education activities

KPI	2018 targeted	2018 achieved	2019 targeted	2019 achieved	2020 targeted	2020 achieved	2021 targeted	2021 achieved	2022 targeted	2022 achieved	2023 targeted	2023 achieved	Total targeted	Total achieved
Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	0	15	2	15	2
Students from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	109	n/a	107	N/R	1037	N/R	1253
Graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	220	41	220	51	165	3451	605	3543
Participants in (non- degree) education and training	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9113	8818	9163	13854	6900	2954	25176	25626

The assessment of these KPIs indicates a combination of accomplishments and areas that demand additional focus. EIT Food has been effective in attracting students to its EIT-labelled MSc and PhD programs and has achieved a high participation rate in non-degree education and training initiatives. However, the absence of start-ups created from EIT-labelled MSc/PhD programs raises concerns about the programs' effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurship. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data show varied results; the KIC overachieved its target by 2023 in the number of graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs, but in all the other fields in the table above, further efforts are required to meet the established targets.

Table 11: KIC's Innovation activities

KPI	2018 targeted	2018 achieved	2019 targeted	2019 achieved	2020 targeted	2020 achieved	2021 targeted	2021 achieved	2022 targeted	2022 achieved	2023 targeted	2023 achieved	Total targeted	Total achieved
Designed/Te sted Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	193	n/a	427	100	n/a	100	620
Marketed Innovations	6	7	30	41	35	31	63	15	63	61	65	70	259	225
Start-ups created of/for innovation	1	1	2	4	5	1	32	15	32	22	18	20	90	63
EIT RIS Designed/Te sted Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146	n/a	357	15	n/a	15	503
EIT RIS Countries – Marketed Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	27	10	11	10	45
EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	10	16	17	N/R	Less than 10	32	27
EIT RIS Countries – start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	3	10	9	10	19

These key KPIs present a varied picture of achievements in the context of the KIC's innovation activities. The notable increase in (EIT RIS) innovations designed and tested in 2021 and 2022 signifies a positive trend in innovation activity. However, the overarching targets established for the number of (EIT RIS and EIT RIS Countries) start-ups created for or by innovation were not met, indicating a need for further enhancement in these areas. The KIC has demonstrated success in marketed innovations, initiating start-ups and developing designed/tested innovations in EIT RIS countries, but there is potential for increasing the numbers further.

Table 12: KIC's entrepreneurship and business creation activities

KPI	2018 targeted	2018 achieved	2019 targeted	2019 achieved	2020 targeted	2020 achieved	2021 targeted	2021 achieved	2022 targeted	2022 achieved	2023 targeted	2023 achieved	Total targeted	Total achieved
Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	55	90	133	127	128	179	392	361	392	533	120	141	1220	1431
Investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups (M EUR)	5.00	21.79	12.50	91.01	26.50	169.75	112.86	406.92	113.46	224.76	50	205	320.32	1119.23

The KPIs related to entrepreneurship and business creation activities reveal a positive trend. The KIC has notably surpassed the targets set for the number of supported start-ups/scale-ups and the investment attracted by KIC-supported start-ups/scale-ups, demonstrating a strong performance in these areas.

As described in the KIC Report PerSe 2022, the Impact Indicator categories and targets outlined in the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 framework demonstrate healthy and on-track progress, facilitated by grant KPIs distributed across functions, regions, and focus areas. In the 2021-2022 Business Plan, all targets were not only met but exceeded. This includes the formation of 10 new start-ups through the SeedBed incubator, support for 280 start-ups in incubation, acceleration, and scaling programs, providing them with access to the EIT Food network, market access through pilot projects with corporate partners, and financial support through activities like FoodSparks and connections with the investor community. Remarkably, the start-ups supported by EIT Food raised over €910 million in external funding between 2018 and 2022, showcasing a significant economic impact that surpasses the SIA target.

Conclusion: EIT Food has made significant steps in fulfilling its 7-year Strategic Agenda (2021-2027). However, according to the key KPIs we can see a varied picture of achievements in the context of the KIC's education and innovation activities, which highlight the need for further actions in some areas. EIT Food successfully attracted students to its EIT-labelled MSc and PhD programs and achieved a high participation rate in non-degree education and training initiatives, yet the absence of start-ups created from EIT-labelled MSc/PhD programs and falling short of the target for the number of graduates from these programs necessitate further focus. Furthermore, even though the innovation activity in 2021 and 2022 was positive, challenges in meeting certain targets including reaching the required number of innovations brought to the market and the start-ups created for/ or by innovation. On the other hand, the KIC was successful in achieving the KPIs related to the number of supported start-ups and scale-ups and the investment attracted through KIC

supported start-ups/scale-ups. Overall, we can conclude that the KIC is on track to achieve its 7-year SA objectives regarding its entrepreneurship activities, however the KIC's education and innovation activities require further attention.

7.2. Objectives and respective targets to the societal challenge.

Indicator: The KIC has achieved its objectives and respective targets as stated in its original proposal and Strategic Agenda in relation to the societal challenge

The KIC's **strategic objectives** and relevant societal challenges determined in the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda are the following:

1. **Overcoming low consumer trust:** EIT Food educates, inspires, and empowers European citizens to take on the role of catalysts for change. EIT Food actively gauges consumer trust levels across Europe and collaborates with EU Institutions in the shift towards fostering a food system that is not only healthy, but also intelligent, inclusive, cost-effective, and characterized by trustworthiness.
2. **Creating consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition:** EIT Food is working to cultivate a stronger connection between individuals and their food, enabling them to comprehend it better and make well-informed decisions about their personal nutrition for enhanced health and overall well-being.
3. **Building a consumer-centric connected food system:** EIT Food is in the process of creating user-friendly and pragmatic digital tools designed to assist individuals in making more informed and sustainable food choices. Simultaneously, within the industry, the technologies stemming from EIT Food programs will enhance product quality and processing methods. These advancements will facilitate transparency and the ability to audit safety, quality, and authenticity of food products, thereby curbing fraud, minimizing waste, and conserving valuable resources.
4. **Enhancing sustainability through resource stewardship:** By facilitating knowledge exchange and fostering rapid progress, EIT Food's customized programs are introducing cutting-edge technologies aimed at diminishing food waste, reducing energy and water consumption, and averting the depletion of precious finite resources. These efforts yield significant advantages for farmers, producers, consumers, and the environment alike.
5. **Educating to engage, innovate and advance:** EIT Food is actively crafting both open-access and personalized educational initiatives accessible to a wide spectrum of society, including students, professionals, emerging farmers, entrepreneurs, and lifelong learners. These programs are designed to furnish them with the most up-to-date insights into food production and consumption. The overarching goal is to bridge the skills gap and nurture a fresh generation of engaged citizens, trailblazers in the food realm, and innovative business entrepreneurs.
6. **Catalysing food entrepreneurship and innovation:** EIT Food supports startups and consolidates resources to invest in the most promising enterprises and visionary concepts that hold the potential to shape the future of our food industry.

EIT Food has set out to achieve the following milestones by the end of the 2021-2027 period:

- Engaging with more than 210,000 consumers to shape healthier and more sustainable behaviours,
- Providing support for the development and testing of over 700 innovations,
- Graduating over 1,300 students from EIT-accredited MSc and PhD programs,
- Enrolling over 345,000 online learners by the year 2027,
- Introducing 180 new entrepreneurs into the food system,
- Assisting over 800 companies in securing investment funding exceeding EUR 350 million.

EIT Food's overarching priority is to enhance health outcomes by facilitating the creation of more personalized diets, while also striving to enhance environmental, economic, and societal outcomes through the advancement of a digitally enabled circular and sustainable food system. EIT Food has formulated strategies to tackle societal challenges specified within the UN SDGs:

- Healthier Diets:
 - o UN SDG 3.4: Addressing the food contribution to Non-Communicable Disease (NCD);
 - o UN SDG 2.2: Tackling childhood Obesity.
- Circular, Sustainable Food Systems:
 - o UN SDG 12.3 Reducing Food System Climate Change Footprint;
 - o UN SDG 2.4 Ensuring Food Security & Safety;

- UN SDG 9: Enabling Transition to a Circular Economy through Capacity Building.

SO1 – Overcoming low consumer trust

EIT Food directed its efforts toward addressing low consumer trust by actively engaging consumers through various channels and initiatives. These efforts resulted in millions of engagements across social media and extensive participation in various events, surveys, and focus groups. The KIC set a target of 12,000 people participating in EIT Food co-creation activities for 2024 in its SA, but there is currently no available information on the actual number of individuals taking part in these activities.

In the upcoming period from 2023 to 2025, EIT Food plans to actively involve 95,000 individuals through different channels, including the Trust Tracker and Citizens Participation Forum. While EIT Food initially faced challenges in consumer engagement, the EIT's assessment of the KIC Interim Report 2022 recognized the creative and effective efforts put into public engagement, aligning well with EIT Food's Strategic Agenda.

SO2 – Creating consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition

As demonstrated in Annex I., the KIC achieved already the targets set for 2024. This implies that the KIC effectively leveraged its efforts to create consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition.

SO3 – Building a consumer-centric connected food system

The KIC set a target of 10 new digital solutions to enhance supply chain efficiency for 2024. However, this target has been significantly overachieved, with 25 such products currently in use. This achievement indicates that the KIC has successfully developed a consumer-centric connected food system, as evident from the impact KPI.

SO4 – Enhancing sustainability through resource stewardship

The EIT assessment of the KIC Report 2020 highlighted that the Sustainability and Resource Stewardship segment (SO4) exhibited strong performance overall, surpassing the Food for Healthier Nutrition segment (SO2) by a significant margin, while the EIT assessment of the KIC Interim Report noted that there is a notable emphasis on the impact of thematic focus, and sustainability within food chains stands as a top priority across most KAVAs.

As shown in Annex I and according to the KIC reported data of 2023 there are 29 solutions contributing to the reduction in volume of CO2 equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system. This represents an overachievement compared to the 2024 target of 15 solutions and means an increased likelihood that the target of 18m tCO2eq reduction in CO2 equivalent / 40 projects by 2027 will be reached.

With regard to the number of new products launched with EIT Food support using revalorized &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, the initial target for 2024 was set for 15 products; however, as of 2023, there are currently only 10 products on the market. In terms of the number of EIT Food-supported products on the market derived from alternative resources, the KIC fell short of its specified target, with only 12 products instead of the intended 15. These findings indicate that the enhancement of sustainability through resource stewardship requires further efforts.

S05 – Educating to engage, innovate and advance: As mentioned earlier, there are 29 solutions contributing to the reduction in volume of CO2 equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system, which is an overachievement compared to the target set for 2024. With regards to the number of new products launched with EIT Food support using revalorized &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams, the initial target for 2024 was set for 15 products, which was achieved by 2023 according to the KIC reported data. In terms of the number of EIT Food-supported products on the market derived from alternative resources, the KIC has also overachieved its targets with 19 products instead of the intended 15.

According to the Strategic Agenda 2021-2027, EIT Food has demonstrated significant advancements in the development of digital skills, education, and digital innovation practices, aligning with the priorities outlined in the EU Digital Education Action Plan. However, the assessment of EIT Food's performance in education to engage, innovate, and advance reveals a mixed outcome. While the KIC exceeded its targets for (EIT RIS) participants in non-degree education and training, it did not meet the goals for the number of graduates from EIT-labelled MSc and PhD programs involved in start-ups. Therefore, further efforts are needed from the KIC to fulfil Strategic Objective 5.

Table 13: KIC's SO relevant KPIs (S05)

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
EIT RIS Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24	n/a	32	25	n/a	25	56
Graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	220	41	220	51	165	3451	605	3543
Students from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	109	n/a	107	N/R	1037	N/R	1253

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
Participants in (non-degree) education and training	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9113	8818	9163	13854	6900	2954	25176	25626
EIT RIS Participants with (non-degree) education and training	216	266	242	333	564	943	n/a	7095	n/a	11663	1725	n/a	2747	20300
EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined start-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	n/a	0	20	11	20	12
EIT RIS EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	0	3	5	3	6

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
joined start-ups														

SO6 – Catalysing food entrepreneurship and innovation

Table 14 illustrates that the KIC's capacity to facilitate food entrepreneurship and innovation shows a promising development. Although there is limited data available about designed/ tested innovations, EIT Food exceeded its KPI targets concerning (EIT RIS Countries) marketed innovations, (EIT RIS Countries) supported start-ups/ scale-ups and start-ups created of/ for innovation. In the EIT RIS Countries, the number of start-ups created of/ for innovation, was minimally below the target by 2023.

Table 14: KIC SO relevant KPIs (SO6)

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
Designed/Tested Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	193	n/a	427	100	n/a	100	n/a
EIT RIS Designed/Tested Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146	n/a	357	15	n/a	15	503
Marketed Innovations	6	7	30	41	35	31	63	15	63	61	65	70	259	225
EIT RIS Countries – Marketed Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	27	10	11	10	45
Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	55	90	133	127	128	179	392	361	392	533	120	141	1220	1431
EIT RIS Start-ups/scale-ups supported	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	118	183	118	401	30	146	266	730
EIT RIS Countries – KIC supported	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	n/a	2	10	18	10	36

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
start-ups/scale-ups														
Start-ups created of/for innovation	1	1	2	4	5	1	32	15	32	22	18	20	90	64
EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	10	16	17	N/R	n/a	32	27
EIT RIS Countries – start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	3	10	9	10	19

Conclusion: The KIC has effectively pursued its strategic objectives, contributing to the societal challenges outlined in its key documents such as the original proposal and Strategic Agenda. In terms of supply efficiency, the KIC exceeded its objectives and with the involvement of 25 new digital solutions, successfully developed a consumer-centric connected food system. In respect of solutions leading to reduction in volume CO2 equivalent tonnes, the EIT Food also overachieved its goals. Moreover, the KIC has nurtured innovation ecosystems, shifted towards impactful entrepreneurship, diversified funding sources, enhanced knowledge sharing, and fostered synergies with key partners. However, in connection with other purposes such as the intended number of the products on the market supported by EIT Food, the KIC has failed to meet the expectations (please note that the KPI definition changed mid-period). Despite minor setbacks, the KIC continues the progress towards its ambitious targets, including sustainable innovation ecosystems, healthier nutrition, consumer-centric connected food system, sustainability through resource stewardship, education, synergies and alignment.

7.3. KPI targets achieved/likely to be achieved.

Indicator: KPI targets including impact KPIs for up to 2024 defined in the KIC original proposal, Strategic Agenda (2021-2027) achieved/likely to be achieved

The KIC's Strategic Agenda for 2021-2027 outlines a set of internal and external KPIs with specific target values for each year of the period. In our analysis, we have noted that the KIC altered its KPI objectives in 2021 and introduced new goals for its activities moving forward. As part of this evaluation, we have considered both the newly established KPIs and their counterparts from 2020. Given the substantial shift in the list of KPIs, some indicators lacked data, and certain KIC-specific KPIs were omitted from the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, a decision that is justified, especially in the case of operational KPIs.

In general, the KIC has defined clear KPI objectives which point to its priorities with regard to innovation, business creation, education, and public engagement. As demonstrated on Table 15. Most targets regarding the KPIs have been achieved by the KIC. Certain indicators have exceeded expectations or performed exceptionally well, such Investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups, and Graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs. . Specific KPIs, particularly those tied to financial sustainability and Participants in (non-degree) education and training are currently not meeting their intended targets. It is crucial for the KIC to make swift improvements in these areas.

In general, as most target KPIs have been achieved during the 2018-2023 period, we believe the KIC is anticipated to attain its objectives over the seven-year period as delineated in their 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda.

Table 15: KPI targets and achieved results

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
Designed/Targeted Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	193	n/a	427	100	n/a	100	N/R
EIT RIS Designed/Targeted Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146	n/a	357	15	n/a	15R	503
Marketed Innovations	6	7	30	41	35	31	63	15	63	61	65	70	259	225
EIT RIS Countries – Marketed Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	27	10	11	10	45
Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	55	90	133	127	128	179	392	361	392	533	120	141	1220	1431
EIT RIS Start-ups/scale-ups supported	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	118	183	118	401	30	146	266	730

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
EIT RIS Countries – KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	n/a	2	10	18	10	36
Start-ups created of/for innovation	1	1	2	4	5	1	32	15	32	22	18	20	90	63
EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	10	16	17	N/R	n/a	32	27
EIT RIS Countries – start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	3	10	9	10	19
Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	0	15	2	15	2
EIT RIS start-ups created of EIT labelled	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	0	3	n/	3	0

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
MSc/PhD programs														
EIT RIS Countries – Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	0	14	n/a	14	0
Investment attracted by KIC supported start- ups/scale- ups (M EUR)	5.00	21.79	12.50	91.01	26.50	169.75	112.86	406.92	113.46	224.76	50	205	320.32	1119.23
Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start- ups/scale- ups (M EUR)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.47	n/a	10.85	7.5	54.3	7.5	71,62
EIT RIS Country – Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	1	15	11a	15	13

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
ups/scale-ups														
EIT RIS Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24	n/a	32	25	n/a	25	56
Graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	220	41	220	51	165	3451	605	3543
Students from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	109	n/a	107	N/R	1037	N/R	1253
Participants in (non-degree) education and training	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9113	8818	9163	13854	6900	2954	25176	25626
EIT RIS Participants with (non-degree) education and training	216	266	242	333	564	943	n/a	7095	n/a	11663	1725	n/a	2747	20300

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined start-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	n/a	0	20	11	20	12
EIT RIS EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined start-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	0	3	5	N/R	6
FS revenues (M EUR)	4.09	n/a	4.29	4.58	4.84	n/a	13.42	6.81	13.42	7.06	8.625	n/a	48,685	18.45
FS coefficient	15.36%	n/a	9.82%	11.45%	6.83%	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.32%	10.79%	14.0%	n/a	N/R	N/R
Co-funding rate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	82.68%	81.55%	76.4%	n/a	N/R	N/R
KIC success stories	6	6	26	27	12	11	20	37	20	73	20	6	104	160

The analysis of the table above indicates a favourable trend in areas like start-up support, investments garnered by KIC-supported start-ups/scale-ups, number of graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programmes, and the KIC success stories. However, there are KPIs that demand additional focus, such as Start-ups created by EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes, number of participants in (non-degree) education and training and the financial sustainability of revenues. In summary, EIT Food has made notable progress over the years, but continuous efforts are required to sustain and further enhance these accomplishments.

Conclusion: EIT Food has made significant progress in its journey toward reaching the KPI targets including innovation, business creation, education, and public engagement as outlined in its initial proposal and the Strategic Agenda for 2021-2027. Particularly commendable are its achievements in reaching certain indicators, such as Investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups, and the number of graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programs. Although the EIT Food has encountered difficulties in meeting specific financial sustainability KPIs (including FS revenues, the FS coefficient, and the co-funding rate), the KIC's overall direction is optimistic, however further effort is strongly recommended to stay on track. Through its continued endeavours, EIT Food is poised to meet its seven-year KPI targets and make substantial contributions to its overarching mission.

7.4. EIT RIS activities and achieved results

Indicator: The KICs have delivered EIT RIS activities and achieved results within the scope of their EIT RIS Strategies. Any deviations are duly justified and having led to maximized results

EIT Food's Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) comprises a collection of tools and resources specifically designed for beneficiaries from EIT RIS countries. Its primary objectives are to bolster their capabilities, surmount obstacles hindering their full engagement in KIC activities, and enhance the level of innovation within the EIT RIS regions. The tools and resources provided by EIT Food comprise initiatives and projects that are centrally coordinated. These proposals are put forth by KIC partners and are executed with the support of a network of EIT Food RIS Hubs. The scope of EIT Food RIS activities encompasses projects within the four Functional Areas, and it extends to various additional activities, including the RIS Policy Council and outreach efforts to engage stakeholders. Within this framework, two primary areas stand out as key drivers for involving local stakeholders in KIC activities, facilitating collaboration, fostering connections, and internationalizing national and regional networks, all in accordance with EIT RIS guidelines.

According to the 2021 Business Plan, initiatives of EIT Food are closely aligned with RIS Strategies. The core objective is to facilitate the transfer of best practices and foster the integration of research, innovation, business, and higher education to propel innovation and entrepreneurship development among RIS stakeholders. Numerous activities within this framework encourage collaboration between public authorities and involve consultations with local stakeholders, in coordination with CLC North-East, CLC South, and EIT Food RIS Hubs.

The primary achievement of EIT Food's RIS activities is its contribution to narrowing the innovation and knowledge gap across Europe. Additionally, these activities serve to enhance the innovation capabilities of EIT RIS stakeholders. EIT Food has established strategic partnerships and networks to optimize collaboration and synergy across regional, national, and EU levels. Notable initiatives include the creation of the EIT Food Executive Academy, fostering collaboration among the KIC community, local and national governments in RIS-eligible countries. Additionally, EIT Food has engaged in cooperation with a Smart Specialization Platform in agri-food hosted by JRC and has established contacts within the pertinent network of H2020 national Contact Points.

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of RIS Hubs increased from 15 to 20 exceeding its 2023 target, therefore it can be concluded that the KIC has a strong network of RIS Hubs.

Table 16: EIT RIS activities and achieved results

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
EIT RIS Designed/ Tested Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146	n/a	357	15	n/a	N/R	503
EIT RIS Countries – Marketed Innovations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	27	10	11	10	45
EIT RIS Start-ups/scale-ups supported	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	118	183	118	401	30	146	266	730
EIT RIS Countries – KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	n/a	2	10	18	10	36
EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	10	16	17	N/R	n/a	32	27
EIT RIS Countries – start-ups created of/for innovation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	3	10	9	10	19
EIT RIS start-ups created of EIT labelled	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	0	3	n/a	3	0

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
MSc/PhD programmes														
EIT RIS Countries – Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	0	14	n/a	14	0
Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start- ups/scale-ups (M EUR)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.47	n/a	10.85	7.5	54.3	7.5	71,62
EIT RIS Country – Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start- ups/scale-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	1	15	11	15	13
EIT RIS Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24	n/a	32	25	n/a	25	56
EIT RIS Participants with (non-	216	266	242	333	564	943	n/a	7095	n/a	11663	1725	n/a	2745	20300

KPI	2018 target	2018 achieved	2019 target	2019 achieved	2020 target	2020 achieved	2021 target	2021 achieved	2022 target	2022 achieved	2023 target	2023 achieved	Total target	Total achieved
degree) education and training														
EIT RIS EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined start-ups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	0	3	5	N/R	6

Conclusion: Based on the EIT Assessment of the KIC Interim Report 2021, the accomplishments within the EIT RIS portfolio align well with and make a meaningful contribution to the KIC strategic agenda. The integration of the knowledge triangle, encompassing education, research, and innovation, appears to be appropriately represented within the portfolio. The overall performance of the EIT RIS was generally satisfactory as the majority of the KAVA indicators are on course with the Business Plan.

7.5. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC with relation to achieving their own objectives:

Strengths
The KIC is on track to achieve its objectives meeting or overachieving most of the KPIs targeted in its Strategic Agenda (2021-2027)
The KIC has delivered on the EIT RIS activities and achieved good results
Substantial progress in number and percentage of EIT Labelled programme graduates employed
Evidenced contribution to economic growth and innovation

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Insufficient progress towards achieving financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diversification of revenue -Continuing the steps taken in the last year as organization casts positive trajectory over the past year. -Paying more emphasis on the engagement with EU contracts. -Strengthen the focus on the local and regional innovation ecosystems to fully exploit their untapped potential. -Place stronger focus on market building activities and on diversifying streams of revenue to build resilience but also focusing on attracting funders.
Low number of EIT-labelled MSc and PhD graduates who joined start-ups	KIC shall aim to better tailor its programs to enhance the skills required for success in start-ups and to contribute to a more effective support system for aspiring entrepreneurs.
Low revenues from innovations launched on the market	EIT Food should focus more on mitigating barriers and nurturing a supportive ecosystem for the commercialization of innovations to improve the

Weaknesses	Recommendations
	success rates of start-ups operating within the EIT Food network.

8. Efforts to coordinate KICs activities with other relevant research and innovation initiatives

8.1. KIC synergies and complementarities

Indicator: The KIC has achieved the concrete synergies and complementarities described in the original proposal and Strategic Agenda

The building of synergies with initiatives with overlapping objectives with the KIC as a vessel towards achieving the KIC's objectives has been highlighted in the PA and SA as well as the Business Plans of the KIC. The 2018-2024 Strategic Agenda specifically highlights the importance of EIT Food functioning as a powerful bridge builder to other initiatives at European, national and regional levels to enhance the overall impact of the KIC. Therefore, EIT Food defined three main approaches to leverage the synergies to create the desired impact of reaching key stakeholders most effectively outside of the traditional agri-food system, as well as public and private stakeholders:

- 1) Seeking collaborations in the form of co-creation projects with other stakeholders of the food system. Already identified partners and initiatives include:
 - o DG RTD, DG Agri, DG Connect, DG EAC, DG Growth,
 - o Cross-KIC activities, in particular with EIT Health, Climate KIC and EIT Digital,
 - o JPIs, JCR,
 - o Marie Curie and Erasmus+,
 - o Investors in the food systems (e.g.: banks, private and corporate investors, the EIF, the EIB),
 - o Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,
 - o World Health Organization,
 - o Consumer associations and foundations,
 - o Insurance organizations.
- 2) Identifying joint opportunities through two-way exchanges and consultations with other relevant initiatives coordinated by the Director of Communication.
- 3) Pursuing information and communication with associations, federations and other organizations.

According to the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, EIT Food facilitates synergies, which will implement the EU Farm to Fork Strategy through:

- Exchange of knowledge between problem owners and solution sponsors, research results to identify opportunities with the goal of transforming the food system,
- Identification of policy and regulatory issues which hinder or promote the development of new innovative solutions,
- Establishing future education priorities for the agri-food sector with the aim of supporting the innovation and transformation capacity of the sector.
- Identification of investment-related synergies, such as with the European Innovation Council, InvestEU and the European Investment Bank to ensure the EU can obtain the benefit of the solutions and technologies arising from its R&I programs.

As stated in the PA, to achieve synergies and complementarities between existing KICs, other European partnerships with different stakeholders and initiatives at European Union and global level, the KIC must engage in activities which allow for:

- Stronger cooperation between the KICs;
- Sharing and disseminating innovative practices and lessons learnt through Europe and beyond, via strategic alliances with key innovation actors at EU and international level;
- Providing input to innovation policy discussions and contributing to the design and implementation of EU policy priorities by engaging with relevant European Commission services, other EU programs and their stakeholders;
- Engaging with EU Member States, at both national and regional levels, to enable synergies with national and regional initiatives, including smart specialization strategies;
- Developing synergies with other EU programs, including those supporting human capital development and innovation;
- Stimulating the creation of innovative companies in close synergy, coherence and complementarity with the European Innovation Council (EIC).

EIT Food has developed partnerships and connections with other relevant education, research and innovation initiatives to enhance synergies at the regional, national and EU levels. As highlighted in the 2021 Business Plan, EIT Food is involved in 11 Cross-KIC projects, such as Water Scarcity. Furthermore, EIT Food also participates in the Horizon2020 project called Fit4Food2030. EIT Food's collaborative involvement includes EIT RIS and infrastructural projects, such as Human Capital and Skills for the Future. Furthermore, EIT Food's Policy Advisory Board (PAB) plays a key role in building collaboration with the European Commission, to develop existing synergies and to identify new ones. The following Commission Directorates (DGs) are on board: EAC, RTD, SANTE, AGRI and MARE. Potential new DGs include ENV and EMPL.

EIT Food has set up a range of mechanisms to enhance collaboration with the regional and national authorities as well EU programs and networks to better exploit the synergies and complementarities. EIT Food is engaged with other European Partnerships to develop synergies in the field of innovation, education and entrepreneurship, including the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA). EIT Food also collaborates with the Joint Programming Initiative 'A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life' (JPI HDHL), the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI), and the Bio-Based Industry Joint Undertaking (BBI JU). EIT Food runs a dialogue with European Commission services and in particular DG RTD – Bioeconomy, responsible for Food2030 policy.

Establishing synergies with the European Innovation Council and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) also remain a top priority for EIT Food, where EIT Food's main priority is to determine the best opportunities and mechanisms to tap into this family of EU instruments. EIT Food is also aligned with the EIT Strategic Framework for Global Outreach Objectives, as it has existing EIT outreach actions in the United States, Israel, and China. EIT Food also established strategic links with BioHorizon, and it is collaborating with the Smart Specialization Platform for agri-food which orchestrates and supports the interregional cooperation of the EU regions in developing a pipeline of investment projects connected to their Smart Specialization Strategies.

Conclusion: EIT Food has actively pursued and achieved concrete synergies and complementarities (including initiatives like Water Scarcity, various infrastructural projects and cooperations with ESIF and EIP-AGRI) as outlined in its original proposal and Strategic Agenda. The KIC's commitment to cross-KIC cooperation is evident through initiatives like Water Scarcity, indicating its dedication to multidisciplinary approaches. Collaborative engagement in the educational projects, such as Human Capital, Skills for the Future and EIT RIS showcase its commitment to strengthen the food system holistically. The KIC has successfully cooperated with national and regional authorities, including several European Partnerships to develop synergies in the field of innovation, education and entrepreneurship. The KIC's involvement in the European Innovation Council and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and collaboration with the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) further demonstrate its alignment with broader EU objectives. This collaborative and integrated approach underpins

EIT Food success in achieving its goals and fostering innovation in the context of health and sustainability in the food system.

8.2. Synergies with other relevant initiatives

Indicator: Number of synergies with other relevant education, research and innovation initiatives in the same area of the societal challenge at national, EU and global level

EIT Food has developed partnerships and connections with other relevant education, research and innovation initiatives to enhance synergies at the regional, national and EU levels. The EIT Food Government Executive Academy provides a platform, where the EIT Food community, KTI partners and local and national governments from the 28 RIS eligible countries are brought together, with the aim of contributing to the Research & Innovation Smart Specialization Strategies and the development of operational programs based on the ESIFs.

EIT Food's 2021 Education Portfolio includes program formats that have been tried over the 2018-2020 period. The areas are divided into 3 main groups:

- The Academy: for degree and certificate-based programs that provide certified pathways to develop core competences;
- The Studio: for co-creative programs for students to solve entrepreneurial and industrial challenges;
- The Field: for engagement with farmers, consumers, and citizens.

All EIT Food Education initiatives are in line with EIT Food's Strategic objectives (SO4, SO5, SO6). Part of the education portfolio was reorganized into Activity Lines in 2018, which focus on the six EIT Food Focus Areas: Alternative Proteins, Sustainable Agriculture, Targeted Nutrition, Sustainable Aquaculture, Digital Traceability, and Circular Food Systems.

Regarding the **Academy Hub**, EIT Food developed the flagship Master in Food Systems program, which allows students to select from a wide array of learning trajectories covering the food system. The fourth cohort of students include 120 students at eight universities in 2020. EIT Food seeks to launch the program as its only EIT labelled masters-level offering. EIT Food's flagship doctoral program, the Global Food Venture Program (GFVP) enables 50 PhD students from Europe to use their innovative research as a catalyst as business transformation in the agrifood sector in Europe. The program aims to raise awareness on the most current food issues and challenges, covering all six EIT Food focus areas. Furthermore, EIT Food's Professional Development activities include the following two main components: the Professional Development Authority, which serves as a European-wide mark of training excellence, and the Professional Development Advanced programs, which provide a unique set of programs to reskill the food system workforce. Regarding the **Studio Hub**, it is focused on three main components. First, the Inspire Programs, which aim to educate students and professionals to upscale their competencies in the field of leadership, critical thinking and communication. Second, the Food Solution Program aims to serve as a catalyst for the creation of innovative, more sustainable, and feasible solutions to real-life industry challenges in the agri-food sector. Third, the European Food Systems Education and Training (EFSET) focuses on bridging the gap between the necessary skills required by the food industry and the available trainings offered by the higher education sector.

With regards to the **Field Hub**, EIT Food provides support through the establishment of RAW! Program, Test Farms, Grow Workshops, Aggrotech Academy, Engage Programs, such as FutureLean and online courses, and Operational Support. EIT Food's GROW project empowers farmers to lead the way in building a sustainable food system through offering education and training for farmers in Portugal, Sweden, UK, Germany, and Poland. Between 2020 and 2023 EIT Food provided training to over 9800 farmers in over 40 training programs across Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Poland, and Portugal under the GROW program. Besides, 100 farms have been advised by EIT Food in Spain and Italy since 2020 covering around 30,000 hectares of farmland. As part of the Test Farms program, 70 farmers tested 85 STARTUP Solutions in Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, Portugal and Italy, with the goal of promoting sustainable innovations around agriculture and providing farmers access to innovation and technology validated by EIT Food.

Additionally, in line with the EIT Strategic Agenda, EIT Food focuses on supporting creation of a systematic impact through strengthening the entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which will be realized through the development of an innovation impact pathway for each HEI.

Conclusion: The KIC has effectively fostered synergies with relevant education, research and innovation initiatives, both at the regional, national and EU level. EIT Food has launched various programs involving hundreds of students and researchers, such as the Master in Food Systems programme, the Food Solution Programme and the Aggrotech Academy, to raise awareness on the most current food issues, encourage innovative ideas in the academic sphere and foster business transformation in the agrifood sector in Europe. Moreover, these strategic programmes, emphasizing innovation, skills, and leadership for the agrifood sector, have yielded substantial educational impact. The KIC's adaptability, global reach, and dedication to transformative partnerships showcase their commitment to addressing the transformation of the food system through collaborative and multidisciplinary efforts, which resulted in the establishment of over 40 education and training programs with more than 9800 farmers participating in various countries all over Europe including Portugal, the UK, Germany and so on.

8.3. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC in its efforts to coordinate its activities with other relevant initiatives:

Strengths
Through introduction of the systems-innovation approach and the focus on facilitating demand for innovation for solutions to agrifood transformation and adaptation, the KIC successfully committed its activities to relying on exploiting synergies with major initiatives, particularly through the Horizon EU Missions, including the Fit4Food2030.
The KIC was successful in building strong relationships with regional and national authorities and various key players in the agrifood innovation across EU Member States leading to long-term cooperative projects with the involvement of the KIC and its network.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Deficiencies in the quantification of synergies	The KIC should establish a system for quantifying and tracking the number of synergies established with other education, research, and innovation initiatives. This could involve documenting the number of collaborations, partnerships, or joint projects and presenting this data in periodic reports.
Gaps in Measurable Impact Metrics	Develop clear, measurable impact metrics to assess the outcomes of collaborative initiatives with other programs. These metrics should include quantifiable results, such as the number of joint research projects, publications, innovations, or policy changes resulting from these collaborations.
Gaps in the Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Records	Maintain comprehensive records of stakeholder engagement, specifying the nature and depth of collaboration with governments, institutions, and organizations. This data can be presented in reports and case studies to demonstrate the extent of the KIC's engagement in enhancing synergies.

9. Capacity to ensure openness to new members

9.1. Partnership characteristics

Indicator: Partnership size, growth, composition and performance are adequate for achieving the long-term objectives of the KIC Strategic Agenda.

As the size, diversity, and geographical spread of the EIT Food Partner community contribute to the key asset of the KIC. EIT Food's initial partnership model had two categories of partners – Core Partners and Affiliate Partners:

- **Core Partners** under EIT Food's governance model, have an influence on the KIC's strategic decisions through the KIC's General Assembly, where the Association of Core Partners have a 10% ownership of the KIC Legal Entity. Core Partner include those from major businesses, universities, cities/regions, and research bodies³⁹. Core partners contribute to the overall governance and strategy of KIC through their 'Association'.
- **Affiliate Partners** under EIT Food's model are involved in implementation of the KIC's activities in total. The categories of partners also involve SMEs and community organizations that are not represented at the level of Core Partners⁴⁰.

As described under section 9.5 "Trend of new active partners", a radical change has taken place with regards to EIT Food's partnership model in 2023, which resulted in a new categorization of partners. Based on the new partnership model, the partners are categorized into the following sub-groups:

- **Strategic Partners:** organizations that seek to actively participate in shaping the strategic direction of EIT Food and possess significant influence at sector and policy levels, both within the European Union and globally.
- **Delivery Partners:** organizations that are highly dedicated to achieving impactful results through the effective execution of projects and programs.
- **Community Members:** organizations that see value in being part of an active network and aim to establish connections with and provide support to EIT Food's strategic and delivery partners.

To create a multi-criteria analysis of EIT Food's partnership size, growth, composition, and performance, we will use a 1 to 4 scale, where 1 is the worst and 4 is the best for each criterion.

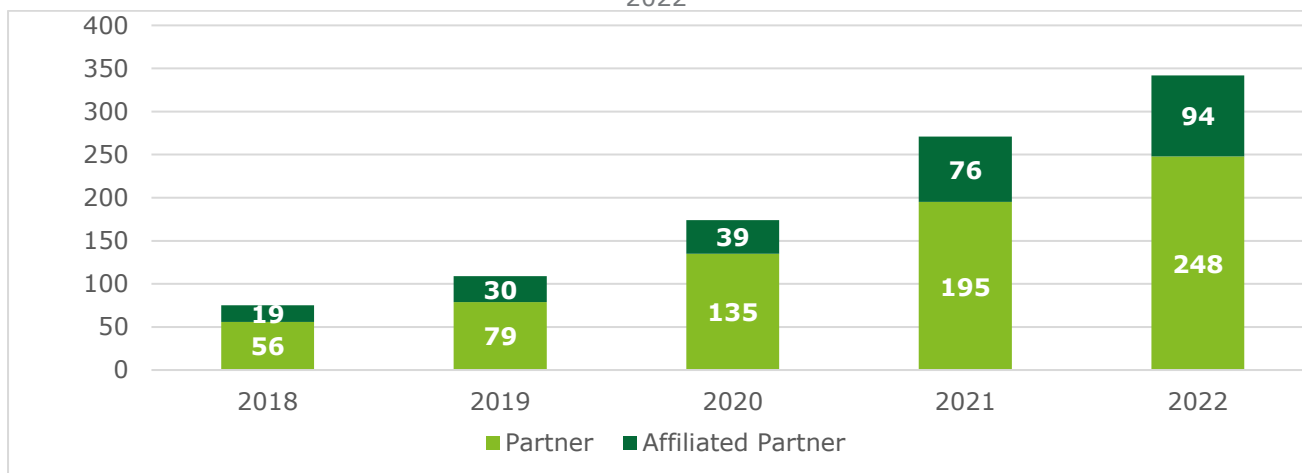
Partnership size

The size of the EIT Food partnership has witnessed a notable increase in recent years, with the count in 2023 standing at 323 organizations, inclusive of 42 SMEs. This growth signifies positive efforts to broaden the partnership base. Notably, EIT Food has undertaken initiatives to enhance accessibility for a more diverse range of stakeholders, with the introduction of new partner categories and improved information dissemination. While the growth is commendable, there is still potential for further expansion, which could contribute to more robust long-term objectives.

³⁹ 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, page 19.

⁴⁰ 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, page 19.

Figure 25: Total number of Partners & Affiliate Partners based on Grant Assessments between 2018 and 2022



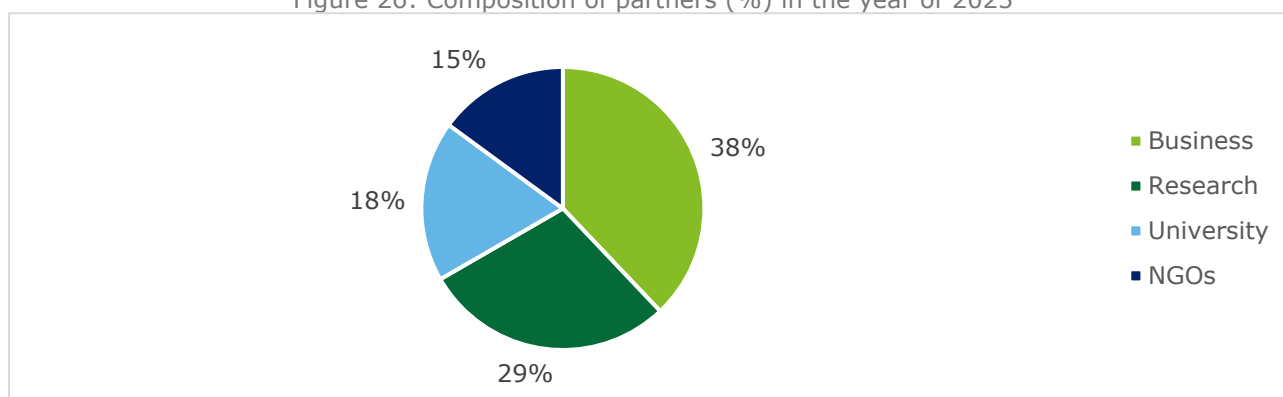
The KIC has experienced a steep and steady growth in both Core and Affiliate Partners from 2018 to 2022, which is a very positive trend. However, with the introduction of the new partnership model, only around 100 partners have transitioned into the new model. However, this decrease can be attributed to the change in the partnership model. Overall, EIT Food claimed they are relatively satisfied with the transition. A score of 3 (Good) is fitting for this criterion.

Partnership Growth

EIT Food's partnership growth before transitioning to the new partnership model has been substantial, embracing numerous new partners, particularly SMEs. This expansion reflects a commitment to diversify and strengthen the ecosystem, which aligns well with long-term objectives. However, with the new model introduced, only 30 new partners joined the partnership as of 2023. Therefore, a score of 3 (Good) is appropriate for partnership growth.

Partnership Composition:

Figure 26: Composition of partners (%) in the year of 2023

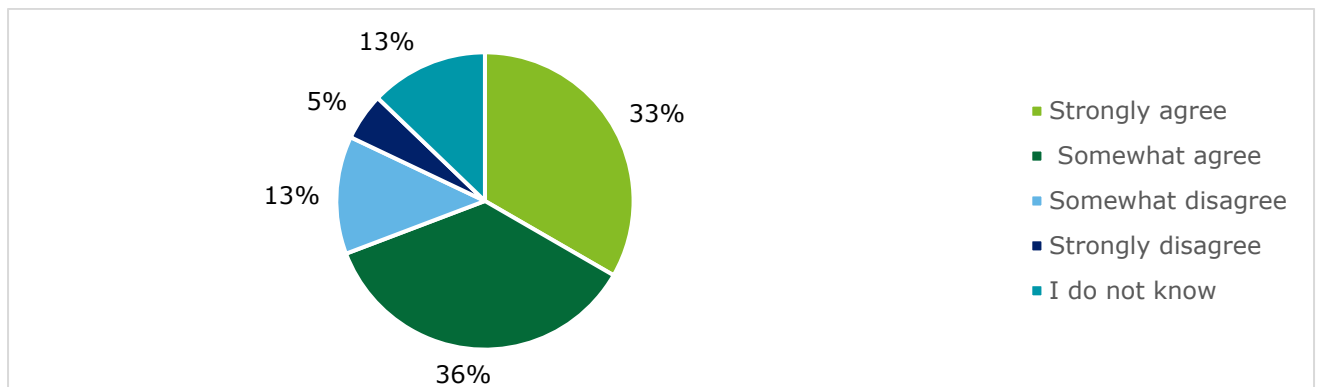


The composition of the EIT Food partnership encompasses a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, including business, research, universities, and NGOs, SMEs, knowledge providers, and various sectors. Efforts have been directed towards ensuring a balanced and comprehensive representation within the partnership. The composition as of 2023 is reasonable and demonstrates progress as the Knowledge Triangle is well balanced, with a proper representation of NGOs, universities, business and research partners in the partnership composition. A score of 4 (excellent) is suitable for partnership composition.

Partnership Performance:

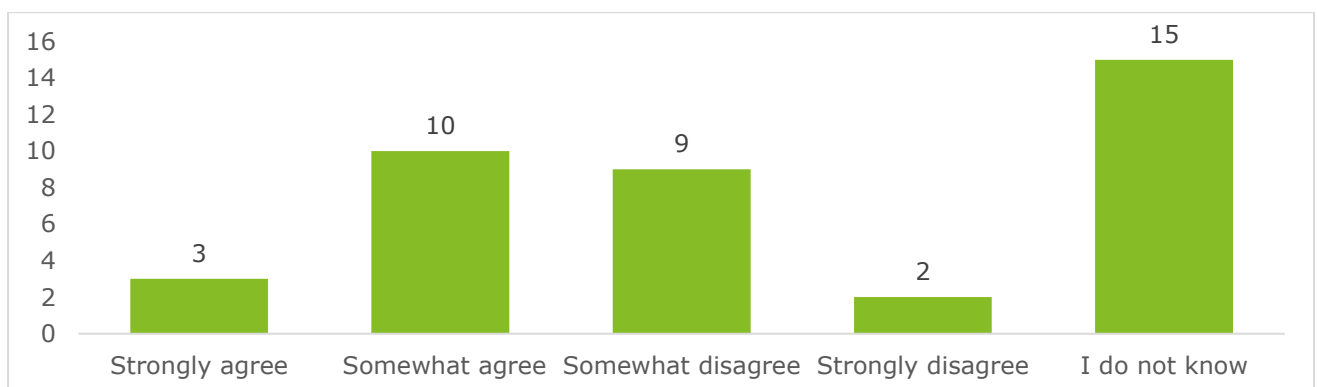
The performance of the partnership is marked by successful collaboration on projects funded by non-EIT sources, indicating its effectiveness and impact. The EIT Food CLCs have also played a pivotal role in executing the KIC strategy and bolstering the partnership. The overall performance is excellent, with a demonstrated ability to collaborate, grow, and achieve positive outcomes in alignment with long-term objectives.

Figure 27: Survey responses to the statement 'The current trends in partnership growth and composition are promising for the future of EIT Food'



The survey results indicate that about one third of the respondents find the current trends in partnership growth and composition promising for the future and another third could not assess this. Additionally, a substantial portion of respondents believe that most current partners are likely to continue their partnership after 2024 accounting. According to our assessment, the score of performance is 4 (Excellent).

Figure 28: Survey responses to the statement that 'Most current partners are likely to keep up the partnership with the EIT Food after 2024.'



Conclusion: The partnership size, growth, composition, and performance all hold substantial promise. While the growth in the number of partners is already significant, there is still potential for further expansion, with which the majority of the respondents of the survey agree (69%). On the other hand, the composition of the partnership is unbalanced meaning the overrepresentation of specific, mainly Western European countries while there is still room for growth in the region of Eastern Europe.

9.2. Openness of calls

Indicator: KIC Calls for activities have been fully open to new members.

To assess whether the KIC Calls for activities have been fully open to new members, multiple criteria were applied and a score from 1 to 4 was assigned, where 1 is poor and 4 means excellent. The assessment will be based on the information gathered during the desk research and through the interviews with the KIC.

Transparency and Accessibility (Score: 4 – Excellent)

The transparency and accessibility of the 2022 Call for Activities stand out as excellent. The call was fully open and transparent, with clear publication on the EC Funding and Tenders portal. This level of transparency ensures that all potential participants, including new members, have equal access to the opportunities within the KIC. It signifies a significant step toward inclusivity and openness.

Inclusivity in Member Selection (Score: 4 – Excellent)

The inclusivity in member selection has improved recently, as seen in the 2022 Call for Activities. Further progress was made in 2023 whereby the main reasons for the previously limited opportunities for non-KIC partners to participate in projects have been resolved and the calls have been made open to all. The eligibility criteria have evolved positively, but further progress is needed to make participation truly open and inclusive to a broader range of organizations.

Engagement of New Partners (Score: 3 – Good)

Efforts to engage new partners have shown promise. There is evidence of an increase in the participation of new external organizations in Calls for Activities, which indicates a positive trajectory. This expansion of the partner base is vital for the KIC's growth and diversity. Nevertheless, there is still potential for more research organizations to join, and ongoing efforts are necessary to further enhance engagement.

Conclusion: The KIC has made significant progress in transparency and accessibility by its clear publication on the EC Funding and Tenders, which ensures that all potential participants have equal access to the opportunities provided by the KIC. The inclusivity of member selection is on an upward trend, and there are commendable efforts in engaging new partners. In 2023 serious efforts were taken to achieve full inclusivity and maximize engagement regarding the main problems in these areas such as the case of limited opportunities for external organizations to participate in projects.

9.3. GGP assessments related to openness to new members

Indicator: KIC has fully addressed the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on relevant GGP assessments related to openness to new members.

The governance structure of EIT Food, as outlined in the provided documents, exhibits several key characteristics that need to be assessed. It's important to evaluate its adherence to good governance principles and whether it aligns with the objectives and strategies of EIT Food.

The evaluation of whether the KIC has fully addressed the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) primarily focuses on the extent to which it embraces and complies with these principles, particularly concerning its openness to new members, as indicated by relevant GGP assessments.

The KIC has made considerable progress in aligning its governance structure with EIT Good Governance Principles. It demonstrates a strong commitment to knowledge triangle integration and inclusivity through regional autonomy. This positive evolution is notably reflected in its pursuit of greater openness to new members.

The level of openness, specifically regarding new members, has improved, indicating a positive trajectory. Calls for activities have become more accessible to a wider range of organizations, including non-KIC partners. This transition toward greater openness has been promising.

Operational transparency within the KIC is generally commendable. Important information, such as the Strategic Agenda, financial data, annual reports, and project-related details, is published on the KIC's website.

'The KIC is actively working to better align its governance structure with EIT's Good Governance Principles. Significant changes, such as transferring ownership of Central Location Centres (CLCs) to the KIC and centralizing core processes, signify the KIC's commitment to greater openness and adherence to these principles. This proactive approach reflects a strong dedication to continuous improvement.

Conclusion: The KIC's governance structure is on a positive trajectory in addressing EIT Good Governance Principles in terms of openness to new members. It displays a strong commitment to inclusivity, knowledge triangle integration, and an evolving governance model that aligns with the KIC's objectives and strategies, making the operational transparency of the KIC generally excellent.' Overall, the KIC's approach reflects substantial progress and an ongoing commitment to achieving the highest governance standards.

9.4. Balanced representation

Indicator: Balanced representation of all key knowledge triangle players in the partnership.

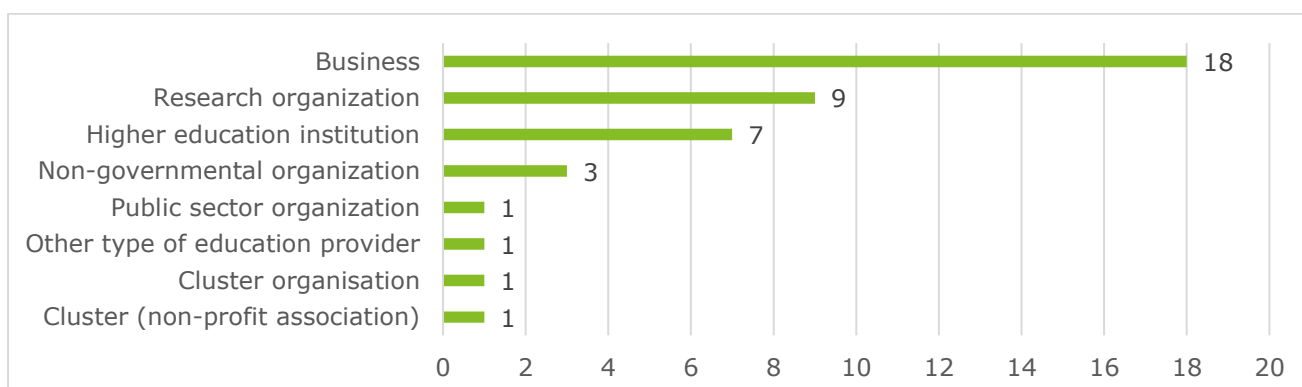
The assessment of the partnership within the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) EIT Food reveals notable changes and progress over the years 2021 -2023. In 2021, several strengths and weaknesses were observed, while in 2022 and 2023, improvements were evident. As previously showed in Figure 27, there was a major development by 2023 and the presence of NGOs, universities, business and research partners in the partnership composition reflected a balanced knowledge triangle. However, previous experiences and impressions of the key players' representation in the partnership still play an important role in determining the direction of development for the next evaluation period of the EIT Food.

In 2021, EIT Food exhibited strengths, such as a strong and committed partnership with innovative universities. Efforts were made to address geographical and supply chain gaps and enhance Knowledge Triangle Integration (KTI).

However, there were distinct weaknesses. The business sector was dominant (44%), and consumer organizations were notably absent from the partnership, reflecting an imbalance in the knowledge triangle. To deal with this issue EIT Food has recently established a Consumer Observatory and has operated a Consumer Advisory Board and Citizen Participation Forum.

In 2022, the KIC made considerable improvements. The partnership generally reflected diversity in the composition of the knowledge triangle. It achieved a better balance, particularly by addressing the dominance of the business side. Clear and objective criteria for partnership, as well as transparent assessment procedures and rules for access and exit, were established. Geographical coverage was properly represented, and the 2022 Call for Activities was open and transparent, allowing non-KIC partners to participate.

Figure 29: Answers of the partner survey about the type of materialized partnership, which resulted in a long-term cooperation and contract

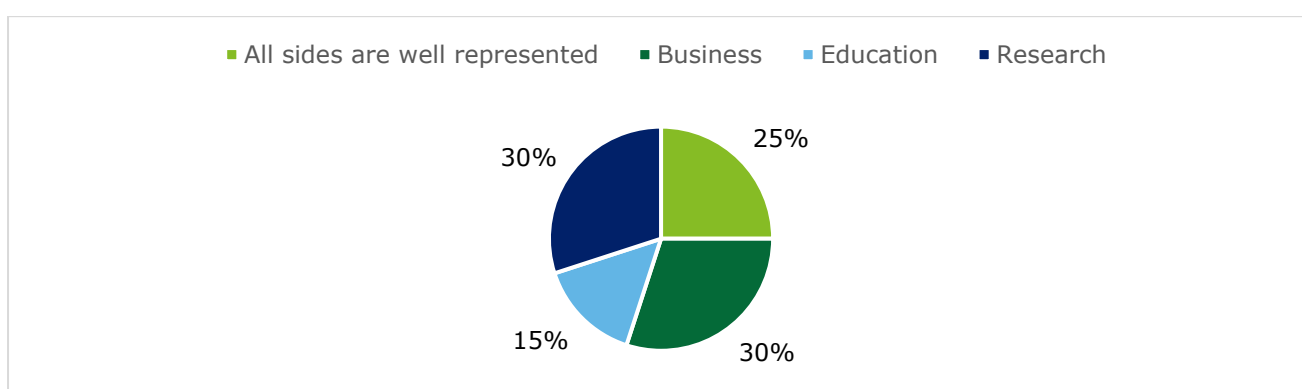


The highest number of partnerships reported falls under the “business” category, with 18 responses. This indicates a significant presence of corporate entities within the partnership. The dominance of business organizations may suggest a potential imbalance in the representation of different knowledge triangle players, particularly if it outweighs the presence of research organizations and higher education institutions.

Research organizations and higher education institutions are also well-represented, with 9 and 7 responses, respectively. This is a positive sign as it reflects the engagement of these key players within the knowledge triangle, which is vital for the KIC’s objectives.

While NGOs and other categories have fewer partnerships, they still contribute to diversity within the partnership. The involvement of NGOs can bring a different perspective to the partnership, and the “other” category encompasses various stakeholders such as public sector organizations and clusters.

Figure 30: Responses to the survey question ‘Which pillars of the knowledge triangle ought to be better represented within EIT Food (if any)?



As of 2022, quarter of the respondents (25%) believe that all sides of the knowledge triangle are well represented within EIT Food. This suggests that a portion of the surveyed partners perceive a reasonable balance among business, education, and research sectors in the partnership.

Both business and research pillars receive the highest percentage of responses, each accounting for 30%. This indicates that the majority of respondents believe that there is an imbalance with business and research organizations as these sectors are underrepresented in the partnership. While strong representation in these areas have been observed in the previous figure, this could indicate that most partners wish to strengthen their key area. These kinds of trends could easily lead to an imbalance in the knowledge triangle.

The education pillar, with a response rate of 15%, is perceived by a smaller percentage of respondents as needing better representation. This suggests that some stakeholders feel that higher education institutions (HEIs) are well represented in the partnership, which is a crucial aspect of the knowledge triangle.

Conclusion: EIT Food's partnership saw significant improvements in 2022 and 2023 after addressing imbalances identified in 2021. While business organizations maintain a strong presence, research and higher education institutions play essential roles. Survey responses reveal mixed perceptions regarding an imbalance with business and research organizations as these sectors are underrepresented in the knowledge triangle. To optimize EIT Food's impact, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure equitable representation across all knowledge triangle players and foster a comprehensive innovation ecosystem, reflecting the need to counterbalance the business sector and to make the presence of consumer organizations in the partnership more dominant.

9.5. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC with relation ensuring openness to new members:

Strengths
The partnership size has grown significantly during 2021 and 2022 including 323 organizations of which 42 are SMEs.
The KIC has maintained an excellent degree of openness and transparency within its calls and has remained accessible for new partners.
The new partnership model further strengthens the openness of the KIC, as it reflects an ongoing commitment to achieving the highest governance standards.
The KIC has maintained a strong commitment to the knowledge triangle integration in the partnership.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Underrepresentation of Eastern European countries in the partnership	Further efforts are needed to counterbalance the overrepresentation of Western European countries and encourage Eastern Europeans to join to the partnership with better adaptation of the specific needs and interests of this region's actors.
Timely and effective response to operational problems	Despite the recognized problems in all aspects of openness from the very beginning of the 7-year period (e. g.: the Supervisory Board's diversity and timely publication of calls), effective change was not achieved until 2022. This example suggests the need to develop a comprehensive monitoring, problem-solving and implementation system and possibly increase available resources to address the shortcomings more quickly in the future.
Underrepresentation of business and research organizations in the knowledge triangle	Continued work is needed to achieve a completely balanced representation of all sectors in the knowledge triangle and ensure a comprehensive

Weaknesses	Recommendations
	innovation ecosystem by promoting the presence of consumer organizations in the partnership.

10. Achievements in attracting new members from across the Union

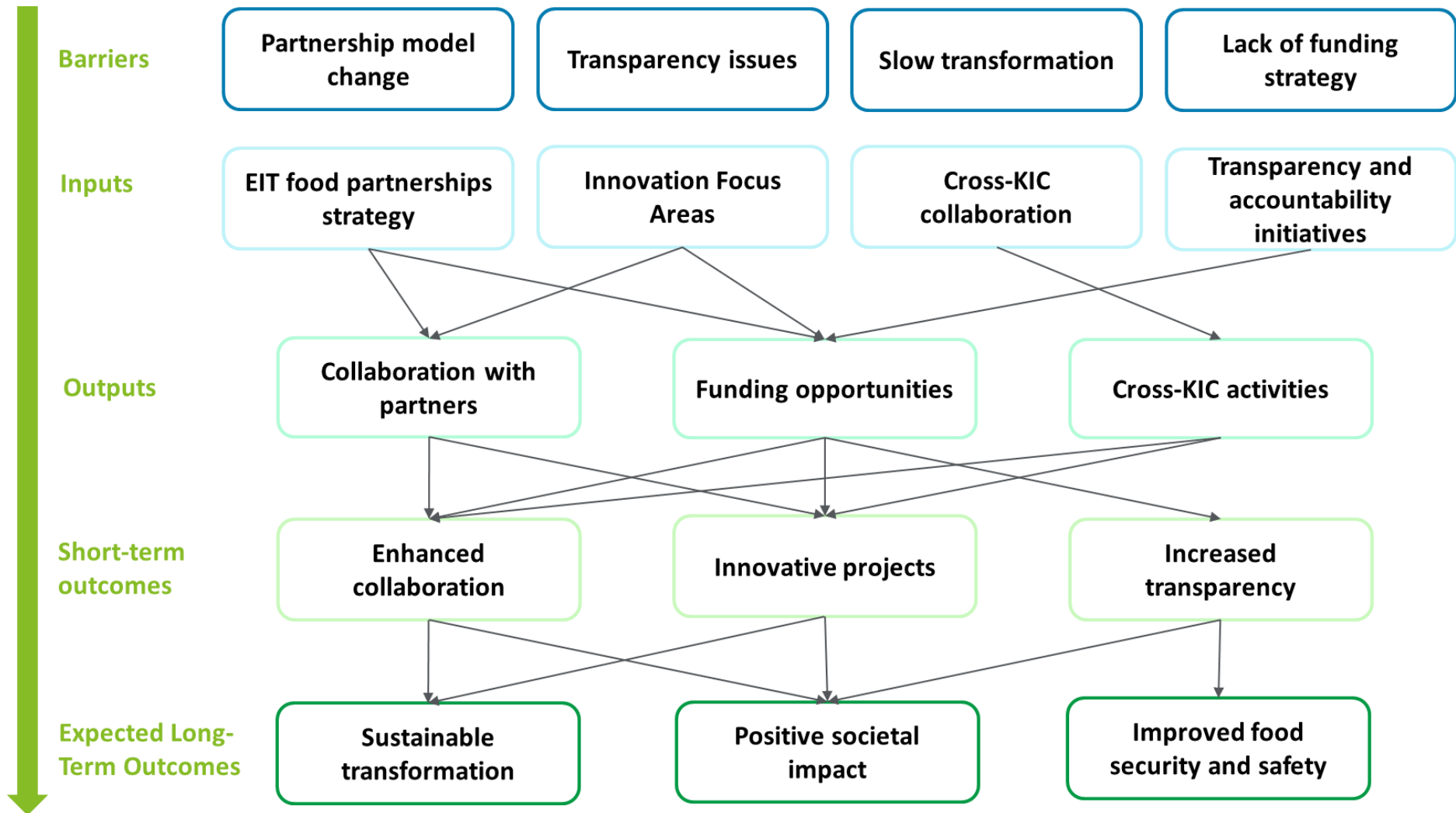
10.1. Sustainable innovation eco-system with partners

Indicator: KIC has grown to an effective sustainable innovation eco-system with partners within and outside the EU, incl. RIS-eligible countries and regions

To contribute to the assessment of performance and outlook of the KIC in this area, we focus on the evolution of the KIC's partnership and present a Theory of Change that encapsulates the most important developments and their effect on the sustainability of the innovation ecosystem around the KIC. As established in the previous Chapter, the KIC was on track in developing its partnership in line. In the following Figure and our following assessment, we elaborate on the context of the KIC's developments to enable forming conclusions on the indicator in question.

In our Theory of Change on the sustainability of the KIC innovation ecosystem, first we identify the main Barriers that needed to be addressed to ensure the envisioned development and sustainability of the ecosystem. Second, we discuss the applied Inputs most relevant in tackling the Barriers. Third, we enumerate the resulting Outputs produced to facilitate the desired developments. Fourth, we identify the short- and long-term outcomes that already materialized

Figure 31: Theory of Change



Barriers

Expanding partnerships, particularly with external organizations, is a significant challenge for EIT Food. The assessment indicates that while the KIC actively seeks to grow its partnership network, it faces complexities due to differing expectations, expertise, and levels of engagement among potential partners. The presence of many external organizations among applicants suggests that EIT Food is taking active steps to address this barrier. Effective collaboration hinges on aligning strategic objectives, navigating varied organizational cultures, and ensuring that both current and new partners contribute meaningfully to the ecosystem. The successful resolution of this challenge is critical for the growth of a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

The desire of large actors and companies in the food sector to maintain business secrecy creates significant hurdles for EIT Food. The reluctance of these actors to share information and collaborate openly can impede the KIC's efforts to build a collaborative and effective ecosystem. Addressing this barrier requires finding a delicate balance between protecting proprietary information and fostering a culture of transparency and knowledge sharing within the ecosystem. Overcoming this challenge is pivotal, as greater transparency would lead to more effective and impactful collaborations and innovation in the food sector.

The inherently slow pace of technological transformation in the food sector is a notable challenge. This slowness impacts the ability to achieve immediate results and, consequently, to demonstrate short-term outcomes. The evolution of the food industry often requires extensive research, development, and the adoption of new technologies, making rapid changes challenging. This barrier highlights the need for patience and a long-term perspective in building a sustainable innovation ecosystem. While the process may be slow, persistence in innovation and collaboration is crucial for lasting positive impacts in the sector.

The absence of a clear funding strategy, particularly concerning entities like the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the European Business Angels Network (EBAN), presents challenges for EIT Food's financial sustainability. This barrier raises questions about how to secure the necessary financial resources to support innovation projects and ecosystem development. To overcome this challenge, EIT Food may need to develop a robust funding strategy that aligns with its objectives, engages with diverse funding sources, and ensures the financial stability needed to drive sustainable innovation within the ecosystem. A well-defined funding strategy is essential for long-term effectiveness and growth.

Inputs

As the listed Barriers were clearly identified and understood by the KIC leadership (as well as the EIT), significant measures were taken to overcome them.

EIT Food has been proactive in its pursuit of expanding its partnership network, as underscored by the findings of the assessment. This concerted effort extends to seeking collaboration with organizations possessing the necessary expertise to meet the KIC's strategic objectives, with a particular emphasis on inclusivity both within and outside the European Union. By forging partnerships that transcend geographical boundaries, EIT Food has tapped into a diverse pool of knowledge, experiences, and resources that contribute to the enrichment and diversification of the ecosystem.

Furthermore, EIT Food's strategic prowess becomes apparent in its identification of specific innovation focus areas. These focus areas serve as guiding beacons, illuminating the path toward addressing pressing challenges in the food sector. By directing resources, efforts, and investments toward these well-defined domains, the KIC ensures that its initiatives are precise and targeted, thereby maximizing their impact on the sustainable innovation ecosystem it seeks to create.

The KIC's participation in cross-KIC activities is a testament to its commitment to building an expansive and interconnected innovation ecosystem. By actively engaging partners from different knowledge and innovation communities, EIT Food harnesses the potential of synergy, allowing it to access complementary knowledge and expertise. This cross-collaboration not only enriches the KIC's understanding and capabilities but also broadens its reach, transcending conventional boundaries to create a truly inclusive and multifaceted innovation ecosystem.

In addition, EIT Food's commitment to enhancing transparency, traceability, and security in the food supply chain plays a pivotal role in shaping the ecosystem. Initiatives in this domain contribute to the establishment of an innovative and resilient ecosystem capable of withstanding challenges and disruptions. By ensuring that the food supply chain operates with integrity and efficiency, EIT Food sets the stage for a more reliable and secure foundation upon which sustainable innovation can flourish. This focus on transparency and traceability also underlines the KIC's commitment to promoting ethical and responsible practices within the food sector, further bolstering the ecosystem's long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

Outputs

EIT Food's partnership network is not only about quantity but also quality, as it actively collaborates with these partners to drive research, innovation, and projects that are closely aligned with its innovation focus areas. The KIC's ability to catalyse productive collaborations with its partners underscores the vibrancy and engagement of its ecosystem. These collaborations yield a diverse range of projects, research initiatives, and innovative solutions, reflecting the ecosystem's robust productivity.

Furthermore, EIT Food plays a pivotal role in facilitating funding opportunities for projects that aim to tackle pressing societal challenges and promote transparency within the food sector. By providing these opportunities, EIT Food empowers both its partners and external stakeholders to embark on projects that have the potential to drive significant positive change. These projects, often backed by financial support, serve as a catalyst for innovation and collaboration, fostering the growth of impactful solutions and partnerships that contribute to the broader goals of the ecosystem.

The offering of funding opportunities not only signify the ecosystem's commitment to addressing real-world issues but also acts as a driving force for the expansion of innovative solutions and partnerships. It serves as a testament to the ecosystem's ability to mobilize resources for projects that hold the potential to shape the future of the food sector, marking a significant stride towards building a sustainable innovation ecosystem that actively drives transformative change.

Short-term outcomes

Enhanced Collaboration: The assessment shows that EIT Food is successfully expanding its partnership network. This enhanced collaboration is crucial for building an effective ecosystem, with partners both within and outside the EU contributing to the collective expertise.

Innovative Projects: EIT Food's funding opportunities have led to the development of innovative projects. These initiatives contribute to the ecosystem's growth by providing solutions to pressing food-related challenges.

Increased Transparency: The focus on transparency and traceability has led to a reduction in the estimated cost burden associated with food insecurity and safety issues. This outcome enhances the sustainability of the ecosystem.

Long-term outcomes

Sustainable Transformation: EIT Food's commitment to addressing societal challenges leads to a sustainable transformation of the food sector, indicating a positive long-term impact on the ecosystem's effectiveness.

Improved Food Security: As the ecosystem matures, the reduction in cost burdens related to food security, along with increased transparency, contributes to improved food security. This long-term impact is vital for the ecosystem's sustainability.

Theory Based Impact Assessment

EIT Food's unwavering commitment to a multifaceted strategic approach, encompassing partnership growth, innovation, cross-collaboration, and transparency initiatives regarding call openness, has yielded a significant transformation within the ecosystem, signifying its continued evolution.

The decision to reform the partnership model stands as a pivotal turning point, enabling an enriched collaboration network that extends beyond geographical confines. EIT Food's concerted efforts in engaging organizations from both within and outside the European Union underscore the ecosystem's effectiveness in harnessing a diverse spectrum of expertise. This not only results in a wealth of knowledge but also strengthens the network's ability to address complex food-related challenges. The strategic shift towards inclusivity is a testament to the ecosystem's adaptability and resilience.

Furthermore, the ecosystem's pursuit of transparency and traceability has demonstrated tangible results as a significant number of new partners has joined the KIC, with the short-term alleviation of cost burdens linked to food insecurity. These initiatives not only improve the food supply chain but also contribute to the ecosystem's sustainability and long-term effectiveness. By fostering an environment where stakeholders can trust and rely on transparent practices, EIT Food paves the way for enduring impact, solidifying its role as a catalyst for innovative and sustainable solutions.

The innovative focus areas, carefully identified and nurtured, have borne the fruit of pioneering projects aimed at addressing profound and long-term societal challenges. The ecosystem's effectiveness in generating solutions that can withstand the test of time underscore the KIC's ability to set a sustainable trajectory for the food sector by driving innovation that transcends immediate concerns.

Cross-KIC collaborations, serving as an intricate web connecting different innovation communities, have been instrumental in expanding the ecosystem's influence and reach. The synergies formed through these collaborations are critical in creating a more comprehensive and impactful ecosystem, one that spans a multitude of domains and leverages the collective expertise of various partners to tackle intricate food-related challenges. These efforts not only broaden the ecosystem's horizons but also solidify its standing as a dynamic and interwoven network of innovation and transformation.

Conclusion: EIT Food's strategic approach, encompassing partnership growth, innovation, cross-collaboration, and transparency initiatives, has transformed its ecosystem. By actively seeking diverse partnerships within and outside the EU, addressing barriers like business secrecy of large food corporations and slow technological transformation of the sector, and nurturing innovation focus areas related to food waste and security, EIT Food is creating a sustainable innovation ecosystem. Their proactive involvement in cross-KIC activities and dedication to transparency further enrich the ecosystem. This approach has led to enhanced collaboration, innovative projects, and increased transparency, translating into long-term outcomes such as improved food security that could reach global level. In the long term, EIT Food's commitment to addressing societal challenges and food security contributes to a sustainable transformation of the food sector.

10.2. EU Member States covered by the KIC partnership

Indicator: Number of the EU Member States covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players

The partnership has demonstrated consistent growth between 2018 and 2022, with the number of partners expanding from 56 to 248, and the number of affiliated entities rising from 19 to 94. As of 2023, the KIC has a total of 343 partners, covering 24 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden) and 10 non-EU countries (including Albania, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and USA).

Figure 32: Country of origin (EU Member States and non-EU countries) of partners in 2022 based on Grant Assessments



Figure 32 demonstrates the distribution of partners across EU Member States. Most partners come from Italy (42), Spain (40) and Belgium (35). Furthermore, 73 partners are from non-EU countries.

Conclusion: There is a strong representation of the KIC's partnership in EU Member States, assuming a larger share each year in the period 2018 and 2022, as demonstrated in section 9.2 under Figure 32. The number of partners increased by almost four and a half times, reaching more than 248 in 24 member and 10 non-member states of the EU.

10.3. Coverage of RIS Countries and Regions

Indicator: Number of the RIS countries and regions covered by the KIC partnership and representation of all the knowledge triangle players in its activities.

The EIT RIS focuses on countries that are moderate and modest innovators according to the European Innovation Scoreboard.

Countries eligible to take part in the EIT RIS are⁴¹:

- EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.
- Horizon Europe Associated Countries: Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine.
- Outermost Regions: Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France), the Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain).

In total there are 22 eligible countries and 7 outermost regions to take part in the EIT RIS of which 17 are EU member states and 5 are Horizon Europe associated countries.

According to the KIC partnership growth strategy specified in the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, 40 partners should participate from EIT RIS countries by 2022. According to the 2022 Grant Assessment, this target is far surpassed, as 140 partners participated from EIT RIS countries in 2022.

⁴¹ EIT RIS Evaluation Report 2020

Conclusion: The number of partners from EIT RIS countries (140) is significantly exceeding the KIC set targets (40). The target number of EIT RIS Hubs (16) was not achieved by 2022 even though it was nearing its target with 15. In 2023, the KIC has exceeded its target (17) with 20 RIS Hubs established. The target number of EIT RIS Hubs was achieved as EIT updated its guidance to the EIT KICs in accordance with the EIT's efforts to minimise scattering of individual KIC EIT RIS Hubs and instead consolidate Hubs in a more unified EIT Community approach.

10.4. Balanced geographical representation

Indicator: Balanced geographical presence of CLCs and EIT RIS Hubs in line with the strategic objectives and societal challenges.

The CLCs, together with their active local involvement, play a pivotal role in cultivating a dynamic innovation ecosystem. They help in building a substantial presence, galvanizing partner dedication, securing regional funding, and ensuring efficient management of knowledge and activities.

The CLC network encompasses regions across Europe, each of which offers access to diverse and sizable markets. This network has been thoughtfully organized into five regions, carefully reflecting the KIC's balanced and complementary mix of industry, university, and research partners: CLC North-West, CLC West, CLC North-East, CLC Central and CLC South. This strategic structure is in line with the KIC's commitment to excellence and fully aligns with its overarching goals and strategy.

CLC North-East serves as the coordinating entity for the performance of RIS Hubs in a range of countries including Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia. Additionally, it will oversee the implementation of EIT Food activities in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Ukraine.

On the other hand, CLC South takes charge of coordinating the performance of RIS Hubs in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey. Furthermore, it will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of EIT Food activities in Cyprus and Malta.

By 2022, EIT Food has established 5 CLCs, which is in line with the target set in the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda. As discussed in the 2021-2027 Strategic Agenda, the goal was to have 16 RIS Hubs by 2022. By 2022, EIT Food has established 15 RIS Hubs. In 2023, the number of RIS Hubs (20) exceeds the target of 17 established Hubs.

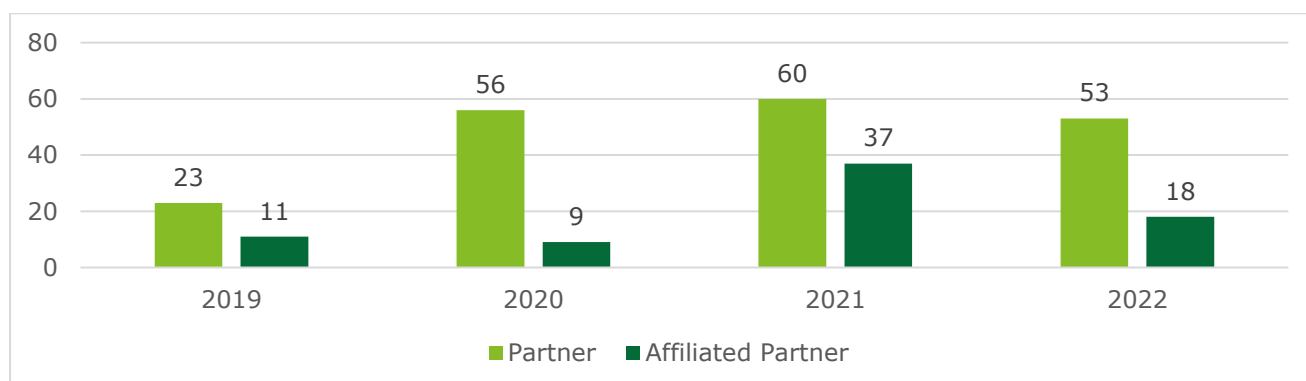
Conclusion: The presence of CLCs is in line with the strategic objectives and reflect the KIC's balanced and complementary mix of industry, university, and research partners, which offers access to diverse and sizable markets. Further to the two existing CLCs there a third CLC is planned to be established in 2024. The KIC exceeded its target regarding the number of EIT RIS Hubs established by having coverage throughout the RIS eligible regions with 20 RIS Hubs, making it a significant development and indicating a greater focus from the KIC to be consistent with KIC's overall goals and strategies.

10.5. Trend of new active partners

Indicator: Trend of new active partners over the period of the review.

This section demonstrates how successful the EIT Food has been in attracting new partners every year until 2022.

Figure 33: Yearly increase in EIT Food partners based on Grant Assessments 2018-2022



As depicted in Figure 33, the most significant increase in the number of new partners occurred between 2019 and 2021. The most successful year in terms of new partners was 2021, with a total of 60 partners joining the partnership. In contrast, between 2018 and 2019, 23 new members became part of the partnership. In the overall analysis from 2018 to 2022, a total of 192 new Partners and 75 Affiliated partners joined EIT Food.

As of 2023, a radical change has taken place with regards to EIT Food's partnership model. As a result of the transition, partner organizations and other connected third parties are no longer included in the Partnership Agreement. Therefore, in the BP 2023-2025, the KIC categorizes its partners based on its membership structure, as follows: Strategic partners, Delivery partners and Community members.

As discussed during the 2nd validation interview with representatives of EIT Food in September 2023, the new partnership model departs from the previous funding-centric approach. This shift has not only significantly increased the openness, but thanks to the new partnership model, EIT Food is able to focus on integration into the network, offering a service-based model to suit partners' engagement preferences and network-building goals. Although EIT Food anticipated that this shift might discourage some potential partners, their objective is to transition as many existing active partners as feasible to the new model, emphasizing adaptability and relationship-building within the network. In 2023, more than 100 partners successfully transitioned into the new model (including 32 Strategic Partners, 51 Delivery Partners and 26 Community members). Additionally, around 30 new partners have joined the EIT Food partnership in 2023, which represents a lower number compared to previous years. However, this decrease can be attributed to the change in the partnership model. Overall, EIT Food claimed they are relatively satisfied with the transition.

Conclusion: While the number of new active partners showed a significant increase between 2018 and 2022, the transition to the new partnership model presents significant challenges in retaining current partnerships after 2024 and in attracting new partners in the forthcoming years.

10.6. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

Strengths

The KIC established an excellent coverage of EU Member States as well as RIS countries in its partnership.

Strengths

☞ The KIC was able to involve new partners coming from various countries including RIS and EU members.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Unbalanced representation of partnerships in the EU and underrepresentation of Central and Eastern European countries	The KIC should work on diversifying its partner base across EU Member States to ensure more balanced representation. Initiatives to attract partners from countries with less representation should be implemented with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe where the average number of partners is 2, which represent a great contrast to Spain with 40 or Germany with 24 partners.

11. Compliance with good governance principles

11.1. Good Governance Principles

Indicator: KIC fully addresses the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP) – based on the relevant GGP assessment

The good governance principles are defined by Article 6 of the PA as follows:

- a) The KIC governance and management structure must:
 - ensure compliance with the provisions of Article 10 of the Horizon Europe Regulation and the criteria for the selection, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and phasing out laid down in Annex III of the Horizon Europe Regulation;
 - reflect diversity, in particular with regard to gender, geographical and professional background;
 - reflect the diversity in the composition of the KIC, in particular the balance within the knowledge triangle;
 - separate ownership and membership from operational management;
 - separate the supervisory functions from the operations;
 - have a size which allows the KIC to function in an effective and efficient way;
 - separate the decisions on activities, on KIC funding schemes and distribution of funding from their implementation;
 - ensure that at least half of the members — including the chairperson — of the body with supervisory functions are independent from the KIC partners;
 - be composed of high-quality members who are selected in a transparent and competitive procedure;
 - have an effective supervision or ownership over the entities with a CLC role.
- b) The KIC must have an effective operational structure to implement the KIC Strategic Agenda and the KIC Business Plans.
- c) The KIC must comply with the following:
 - As an institutionalized European partnership, the KIC should act in the EU public interest.
 - The KIC must adopt its Code of Conduct based on the model provided by the EIT which includes policies on conflict of interests, ethical values, and integrity.
 - In order to reinforce the highest standards of integrity and to reduce the risk of fraud, the KIC must adopt an Anti-fraud Strategy followed up by an action plan. The Anti-fraud Strategy must be reviewed every two years.
 - The KIC LE and entities with a CLC role must have a Procurement Policy in place to ensure compliance with the substantive requirements of EU public procurement law, in particular with the main principles of transparency, equal treatment, non-discrimination and competition.
 - KIC must have Gender Mainstreaming Policy in place to ensure gender responsive portfolio of activities and balanced gender representation in decision making.
- d) The KIC LE must ensure that, within the scope of the KIC Strategic Agenda, KIC partners act in the best interest of the KIC, safeguarding its goals, mission and identity.
- e) The KIC must have an IP Board in place in order to advise on intellectual property rights related issues.
- f) These principles must be transposed in the KIC internal arrangements (see Article 5.3)."

EIT Food's adherence to the GGP practices can be summarized as follows based on the GGP Note to file 2021 document:

Following significant improvements, the **level of openness is good**. The criteria which are in place to become a partner are clear and objective, and the RIS Hub calls and the calls for start-ups are available for non-KIC partner organizations as well. There are also adequate internal provisions in the KICs internal/statutory agreements regarding the number of independent members in the supervisory body. Moreover, as of 2021, there were five independent members, and a chairperson in the supervisory body and 4 are representatives of the CLC's.

EIT Food's **operational transparency is good**. There is a published partnership entry/exit criteria. On its website, the following information is published: Strategic Agenda; financial data; annual report; results, success stories, and KPIs. The full list of projects under implementation is also available. The KIC publishes open calls to select experts (notably, to evaluate project proposals), RIS Hubs, as well as KIC publishes vacancy notices and procurements. Furthermore, the KIC Supervisory Board's decisions are published on the intranet.

The **selection of the personnel on KIC LE and CLCs level is very good**, as the recruitment policy includes non-discriminatory provisions and meets GDPR requirements.

The **diversity of EIT Food's Supervisory Board (SB) is good**. Out of the interim board members, 5 are female and 4 are male members, which is a strong indication of gender diversity. However, there are no members representing RIS countries.

The **diversity of EIT Food's Management is very good**. The KIC established internal rules regarding the gender and professional diversity, and it also ensures geographical and gender diversity, as the ratio of female members is 60% in this female dominated sector. Germany is the most represented country with 30% which is not exceptionally high. The KIC also shares information on the CLC Management Teams.

EIT Food is committed to adhering to the EIT Good Governance Principles (GGP), however, some areas require greater efforts and commitment. Regarding the strengths, the KIC generally reflects the diversity in the composition of the partnership, and it is in balance within the knowledge triangle. Open and high-quality decision-making processes are ensured, and HR policies are in place. Partners are informed of the decisions of the Supervisory Board. The supervisory function is separated from the operations and is integrated into the checks and balances. There is also a stable governance structure, and the procurement policy is in place. Internal agreements of the EIT GGPs are transposed well.

Conclusion: Based on our assessment, the KIC complies with the EIT Good Governance Principles. Operational transparency, the diversity of EIT Food's Management and the selection of the personnel on KIC LE and CLCs level were all well rated and it can be concluded that much progress has been made in these areas. To highlight some of the strengths: clear and publicly accessible information regarding partnership, Strategic Agenda, financial data, annual report, results, success stories, and KPIs. A full list of the KIC's projects is also available on its website. The recruitment policy of personnel at KIC LE and CLCs levels includes non-discriminatory provisions and meets GDPR requirements. Gender and geographical diversity are also outstandingly implemented thanks to the KIC internal rules dedicated to gender equality and professional diversification.

11.2. GB Strategic recommendations

Indicator: GB Strategic recommendations have been effectively addressed and fully implemented by the KIC

The EIT GB issues an annual Strategic Recommendation document that covers the areas to be further developed in the KIC. The progress made on the strategic recommendations is followed by a monitoring visit, which results in the production of a Rapporteur Monitoring Report. Strategic recommendations cover all aspects of the KIC (e.g., governance, activities, finances, collaboration).

After the Governing Board Rapporteur visit on September 2023, the EIT Governing Board assessed EIT Food's activities 'neutral to very good', with one out of three challenges receiving 'good' status and the remaining two a 'very good' score. In line with its supervision and intervention framework, the EIT Governing Board issued the following strategic recommendations (SRs) to address the weaknesses identified:

- 1) **SR 1 – Financial sustainability:** It was confirmed that it is important to maintain financial sustainability by investing into start-ups with high growth potential, which could create increasing revenues for the KIC. Previously, the need for further efforts was identified to effectively remove all the causes of the limited returns of investments, which was successfully addressed by re-designing the KIC's return mechanism to improve its focus on success sharing with uncapped return potential

for over-performing projects. This would have a positive effect on the income diversity, which was below the BP and SA targets with most of the KIC's FS revenues coming from Membership Fees. The KIC is continuing to focus on its alternative funding revenue system and expects around EUR 370-390 thousand to be generated by its education activities in 2023. Furthermore, its cooperation with the FoodSparks fund managed by PeakBridge is expected to generate EUR 3.8-4.8 million value for the KIC between 2031-33. Therefore, the GB evaluated the KIC's progress of financial sustainability 'good' with high expectations of the education programmes and business model while the main weakness remains low income diversity. However, it is important to complement the GB Rapporteur Visit's findings with the conclusions that can be drawn from the fact that at the end of 2023 the KIC needed additional EIT financial contribution of EUR 14,820,338 for the implementation of additional activities in the Business Plan in 2023-2025 and EUR 1,110,427 for Strategic Synergies. The EIT Governing Board expressed its concerns about the insufficient progress of the KIC in financial sustainability and long-term survival of the KIC. The main challenges are in line with the GB Rapporteur Visit's recommendations related to SR1 and SR2.

- 2) **SR 2 – Innovation:** Due to the under achievements of KPIs in the field of innovation in 2021, further efforts were needed to improve the impact of marketed innovation programmes to strengthen its performance in the RIS countries and regions. Thanks to the great implementation of the responses during 2022, the KIC has overachieved its targets set out in the Strategic Agenda 2021-27 and Business Plan 2021-22 by 2023 in various aspects including the number of Marketed Innovations, supported start-ups/ scale-ups, start-ups created of/ for innovation, investment attracted by KIC supported start-ups/ scale-ups and graduates from EIT labelled MSc/ PhD programmes. Alongside the impactful results there were also underachieved targets (Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes = 0 reported vs 8 planned, EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined Start-ups = 1 reported vs 19 planned). However, these can be explained by external causes outside the KIC's control like the challenging legal regulations of the food sector and the difficulties due to the conditions of Bologna. In accordance with the GB's evaluation, the progress within the area of innovation is 'very good', but dealing with shortcoming to support EIT students in creating and joining start-ups remains an area of further improvement.
- 3) **SR 3 – Control over CLCs:** They recommended further efforts to ensure effective supervision and control over all CLCs by ownership and governance. Thanks to the impactful efforts during 2022, four out of the five CLCs are fully owned by the KIC Legal Entity, the only exception is CLC Central. However, as a result of negotiations between EIT Food IVZW Supervisory Board and the shareholders of CLC Central, shareholders committed to sell their shares by the end of 2024. According to the success of the process and alongside with the GB's evaluation, the KIC's control over the CLC's can be rated 'very good'.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that EIT Food performs exceptionally well in implementing the GB Strategic Recommendations.

Conclusion: EIT Food has significantly enhanced its financial sustainability, innovation capabilities and control over CLCs as great efforts were taken to address previous challenges identified in the Interim Report 2021-22 assessment. Among its greatest achievements is the removal of all the caps that limited the returns to the KIC from investments in successful innovations, strengthening its performance in the innovation area and accessing control over all CLCs by the end of 2024. However, there is still room for improvement in some shortcomings including the diversity of financial sources and the supporting students in creating and joining start-ups.

11.3. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC with the relation to compliance with good governance principles:

Strengths
The KIC strongly complies with the good governance principles by its stable governance structure, and the procurement policy.

Strengths
KIC generally reflects the diversity of partnership composition and maintains balance within the knowledge triangle.
The KIC is committed to providing its partners with transparent communication regarding the decisions made by the Supervisory Board, which is separated from the operational functions.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Low-income diversity	A more diverse income composition and counterbalancing the dependence on Membership Fees with other sources would have a positive impact on the KIC's development progress towards financial independency.
Supporting students in creating and joining start-ups is not sufficient enough	A better understanding of the reasons that prevent students from creating and joining start-ups is recommended. The establishment of a more effective support strategy is also suggested.

12. Efforts and results in designing and implementing gender-sensitive measures and activities

12.1. Gender

Indicator: KICs have designed and implemented gender sensitive measures and activities

In the EIT SIA for 2021 to 2027 maintains that in KIC activities, particular attention is to be paid to gender balance and gender-sensitive approaches, in particular in areas where women remain underrepresented. In line with this aspiration, the FPA 2016 already set out for the KIC to aim for gender equality as an obligation in its Article 39. Accordingly, the KIC partners are expected to promote equal opportunities to men and women in the implementation of their specific action, furthermore to the possible extent they should aim for gender balance of all levels of personnel.

EIT Food has designed and implemented several gender-sensitive measures and activities to promote gender equality and diversity within its organization and programs. Since 2016, EIT has taken a series of actions to improve gender balance and gender-sensitive approaches. In 2020 and 2021, EIT provided gender equality training to all employees, shared and promoted good practice on gender mainstreaming within the EIT community including the use of gender-neutral language in its operational and management procedures. In addition, all EIT KICs have their own gender equality policies and action plans in line with the European Commission (EC) Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Moreover, the EIT provided targeted support to women-led businesses and entrepreneurs and in the recent years, a number of gender equality projects have been developed within the EIT community, including for example the Girls Go Circular (GGC).

The KIC's original proposal emphasizes driving recruitment to ensure gender equality in all sectors of food production. It commits to reaching out to all corners of Europe, with a special emphasis on RIS countries. Additionally, EIT Food commits to achieving gender balance among entrepreneurs, with a specific goal to increase the participation of women in entrepreneurship, given that only 7% of new business entrepreneurs in Europe are women. This commitment demonstrates a clear focus on addressing gender imbalances from the outset.

SMART Indicators, specifically the Skills for the Future and Girls Go Circular projects, aim to equip secondary school students, including girls and young women, with the skills they need to address societal challenges, with a focus on thematic areas relevant to EIT Food. These projects not only aim to spark interest among girls, but also track their participation and long-term career choices, addressing the gender gap in relevant fields. EIT Food runs programs that specifically target women in RIS countries, such as the Empowering Women in Agrifood program and EIT Food WE Lead. These initiatives aim to support and empower women in these regions, recognizing the unique challenges they may face.

EIT Food has made it clear that gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are actively promoted within the organization's culture. The commitment to fostering a culture that actively lives and breathes gender equality and diversity principles is evident in their actions, such as appointing a Diversity & Inclusion champion at the Management Board level. EIT Food has made efforts to ensure gender diversity in its leadership and governance bodies. The proportion of female members in the management and supervisory boards is highlighted in their multi-annual dashboard reports.

The KIC has developed and continues to update gender action plans. These plans outline their commitment to diversity and gender equality, including specific actions and initiatives to address gender imbalances. This demonstrates a long-term commitment to gender equality and diversity within the organization. EIT Food tracks and reports on gender balance and diversity in its programs and activities. For example, they monitor the gender balance of their education courses and entrepreneurship programs, and they report on the gender composition of their management and governance bodies. This demonstrates transparency and accountability in addressing gender imbalances.

EIT Food requires gender and diversity issues to be addressed in all proposals received for inclusion in its Business Plan portfolio. This requirement ensures that gender and diversity considerations are integrated into the content and composition of activities and teams.

Conclusion: Overall, EIT Food has taken a comprehensive approach to address gender imbalances and promote gender equality and diversity in its activities and organization. They have set clear goals, implemented specific initiatives, monitored progress, and integrated gender and diversity considerations into their decision-making processes, which demonstrates a strong commitment to these principles.

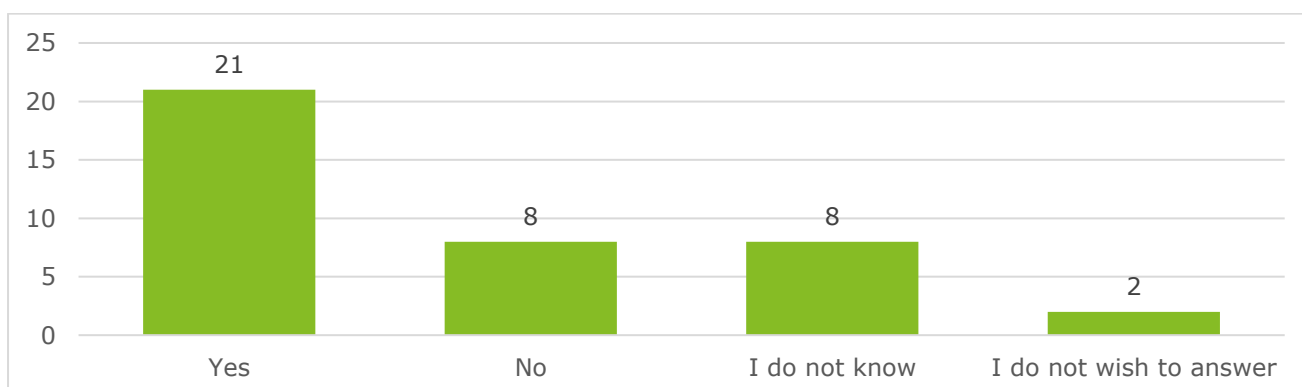
12.2. Expert's assessment

Indicator: Positive expert's assessment of the outputs and results delivered by these activities

While a formal expert assessment may be lacking, the data and partner feedback clearly indicate that EIT Food's gender-sensitive measures and activities have yielded positive outcomes and results. These efforts have not only improved gender representation but have also contributed to a more inclusive and equitable environment within the organization and the wider food ecosystem, reflecting a commitment to excellence in promoting gender equality. According to our interview with KIC leadership, conducted gender equality assessments frequently inform project and program design in EIT Food to ensure these are gender responsive however, there have not been backward-looking external assessments focusing on the gender dimensions of outputs and results or focusing on gender empowerment activities specifically.

Firstly, the data from the KIC report showcases significant achievements in terms of gender representation, with almost diverse representation of female and male graduates from labelled programs, reflecting the KIC's substantial commitment to attract each sex equally in a sector typically dominated by women.. Furthermore, the report highlights that all major Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were not only met but, in many cases, exceeded. This success is underscored by a well-balanced gender distribution among graduates and program participants, demonstrating that EIT Food's initiatives have effectively promoted gender equality. Additionally, the noteworthy transition within the Supervisory Board, with a new Chair and four new members appointed in 2022, reflects a conscious effort to improve gender balance and board independence. This change enhances diversity and inclusivity at the highest decision-making level, further underlining EIT Food's commitment to gender sensitivity.

Figure 34: Answers to the partner survey question: Are you aware of any of the actions taken by EIT Food to promote gender equality in the EIT Food Community and the Food ecosystem, including projects and programs?



The partner survey responses provide valuable insights into the perception of EIT Food's gender equality efforts within its community and the broader food ecosystem. A significant number of partners are aware of the actions taken by EIT Food to promote gender equality, indicating effective communication and transparency in these endeavours. Moreover, the overwhelmingly positive responses regarding the consideration of gender mainstreaming throughout the KIC project and activity selection process, with a majority rating it as "Excellent" or "Exceeds expectation," suggest that gender sensitive policies and activities are well-received and viewed as highly effective.

Based on available information we understand that gender mainstreaming and inclusivity are consistently incorporated into the KIC's operational practices as well as the design and implementation of its activities in general.

Conclusion: While a formal expert assessment may be lacking, the data collected during our desk research and partner feedback to the surveys clearly indicate that EIT Food's gender-sensitive measures and activities have yielded positive outcomes and results. These efforts have not only improved gender representation but have also contributed to a more inclusive and equitable environment within the organization and the wider food ecosystem, reflecting a commitment to excellence in promoting gender equality.

12.3. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The following table indicates some of the most significant strengths of the KIC with the relation to implement gender sensitive measures:

Strengths
EIT Food demonstrates a strong commitment to gender equality, as evidenced by its focus on gender balance and gender-sensitive approaches in its activities and programs.
EIT Food emphasizes gender diversity in its leadership and governance bodies, promoting inclusivity at the highest levels of decision-making.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Lack of impact assessment and monitoring of the GEP implementation	Initiate assessments to retrospectively evaluate the impact of gender-sensitive activities and identify areas where improvements can be made. These assessments can inform future strategies.
A significant share of partners of KIC may not be sufficiently aware of the KIC's policies and efforts pertaining to pursuing gender equality	The KIC should make sure that its relevant policies, plans and activities in the area are effectively communicated to partners to ensure their alignment.
The limited number of specific projects focused on gender mainstreaming in the innovation field appear to have started only recently	The KIC should evolve Its portfolio to ensure that gender mainstreaming activities are represented to an extent consistent with its prioritization of fostering gender equality in its vision.
Lack of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the EIT Food Gender Equality Plan; gaps between design and implementation phase.	EIT Food is committed to gender equality and diversity within the organization however, gaps in the implementation and development of gender action plans is recommended to achieve long-time success.

13. Capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems and the achieved level of financial sustainability

13.1. Ecosystem addressing societal challenges

Indicator: The KIC has created a sustainable innovation ecosystem effectively addressing the societal challenges and skill gaps it was established for

Please see our Theory of Change as Figure 31 in chapter 8.1 that we have created to illustrate our theory-based impact assessment.

EIT Food's journey towards establishing a sustainable innovation ecosystem, adept at effectively addressing societal challenges and bridging skill gaps, has been marked by substantial progress and impactful outcomes. In this impact assessment, we delve into the KIC's transformative trajectory, emphasizing how it has navigated barriers, harnessed strategic inputs, generated valuable outputs, and achieved both short and long-term outcomes in pursuit of its mission.

Barriers

EIT Food recognized the challenge of expanding its partnership network, especially with external organizations. This complex task involved aligning strategic objectives, navigating diverse organizational cultures, and ensuring meaningful contributions from partners. To overcome this, EIT Food actively sought collaboration, promoting inclusivity within and outside the EU. This strategic shift bolstered the ecosystem, enhancing its effectiveness.

Large actors and companies in the food sector were hesitant to share information and collaborate openly, posing significant hurdles. Addressing this barrier required finding a balance between proprietary information protection and fostering transparency. Overcoming this challenge was pivotal in fostering effective and impactful collaborations and innovation in the food sector, contributing to the ecosystem's sustainability.

The inherently slow pace of technological transformation in the food sector presented challenges in achieving immediate results and demonstrating short-term outcomes. The KIC recognized the need for patience and a long-term perspective, persisting in innovation and collaboration to create lasting positive impacts in the sector.

Inputs

EIT Food proactively addressed these barriers with following strategic inputs:

Actively seeking diverse partnerships, both within and outside the EU, enriched the ecosystem's pool of knowledge and resources. The emphasis on inclusivity fostered productive collaborations, enhancing the effectiveness of the ecosystem.

Identifying specific innovation focus areas provided clarity and precision in addressing pressing challenges in the food sector. By directing resources towards these areas, the KIC maximized the impact of its initiatives.

Active engagement in cross-KIC activities broadened the ecosystem's reach by tapping into complementary knowledge and expertise from different communities. This cross-collaboration enriched the ecosystem's understanding and capabilities.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing transparency, traceability, and security within the food supply chain strengthened the ecosystem's resilience. These efforts ensured a reliable and secure foundation for sustainable innovation.

Outputs

These strategic inputs generated valuable outputs:

EIT Food's partnership network evolved not only in quantity but also in quality. The KIC actively collaborated with partners to drive research, innovation, and projects closely aligned with its innovation focus areas. These collaborations yielded a diverse range of projects, research initiatives, and innovative solutions, reflecting the ecosystem's robust productivity.

EIT Food's provision of funding opportunities empowered partners and external stakeholders to embark on projects addressing pressing societal challenges and promoting transparency in the food sector. Backed by financial support, these projects acted as catalysts for innovation and collaboration, fostering the growth of impactful solutions and partnerships.

Short-term Outcomes

EIT Food successfully expanded its partnership network, including partners from within and outside the EU, contributing to collective expertise, making collaboration more effective.

The funding opportunities led to the development of innovative projects, providing solutions to immediate food-related challenges.

The focus on transparency and traceability resulted in a short-term reduction in the estimated cost burden related to food insecurity and safety issues, contributing to the ecosystem's sustainability.

Long-term Outcomes

EIT Food's commitment to addressing societal challenges led to a sustainable transformation of the food sector. This enduring impact indicated the ecosystem's effectiveness in driving long-term positive change.

Over time, the reduction in cost burdens related to food security, coupled with increased transparency, contributed to improved food security. This long-term impact was vital for the ecosystem's sustainability.

Multi-criteria Impact Assessment

Alignment with Call Ambitions (Score: 3):

This criterion assesses how well the KIC aligns with the specific call ambitions and innovation focus areas. A score of 3 indicates that the KIC effectively addresses these challenges and guidelines. It demonstrates a good understanding of the thematic areas and aligns its activities with the defined objectives.

The KIC demonstrates effective alignment with call ambitions and innovation focus areas, including Protein Diversification and Targeted Nutrition. It consistently addresses the thematic challenges and guidelines set forth in these areas. This alignment reflects a good understanding of the defined objectives, allowing the KIC to focus its efforts on relevant societal challenges.

Portfolio Mapping and Objectives (Score: 3):

Here, we evaluate the alignment of the KIC's portfolio with its strategic objectives. A score of 3 reflects a strong alignment of portfolio mapping with the strategic objectives in both 2018 and 2019. However, the assessment reports from 2019 and 2020 indicated some room for improvement in this area.

Innovative Ecosystem Development (Score: 3):

This criterion assesses the KIC's approach to developing an innovative ecosystem and evaluating its value. A score of 3 shows that the KIC effectively deploys its Solution Innovation as a Service (sIaaS) model, which

focuses on transformative change and learning. The ecosystem value and evaluation also receive a score of 3, indicating a robust approach to assessing the ecosystem's impact.

Financial Sustainability (Score: 3):

The KIC demonstrates strengths in financial sustainability, particularly in diversifying revenue sources and generating income from incubation and acceleration support. This diversification reduces dependency on traditional funding sources. However, regarding upper limits for revenues and lump-sum payments, suggest that it might face constraints in generating a positive return on investment for some activities.

For the start-ups supported by KIC, it was concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls were significant in terms of investments (total assets – at 1% significance level), and their profitability (5% significance level) the latter in a negative way.

Based on the available data it can concluded that growth in assets is significantly higher in supported start-ups than in the control group, reaching 745,015 Euros in 2021 compared to the 81,460 Euros of the control group in the same year.

Impact analysis

However, it raises serious concerns from a financial sustainability point of view that supported start-ups seem to be heavily loss-making reaching a very low value of -186,715 Euros, while the control group's profit before taxes is increasing consistently in time by almost 20,000 Euros over the analysed period. The consistent decrease of profits before taxes at KIC supported enterprises took an even steeper decline in 2021, when in this one year, their profits dropped more, than it did in the previous years combined.

Figure 35: Total assets of KIC supported start-ups and control group

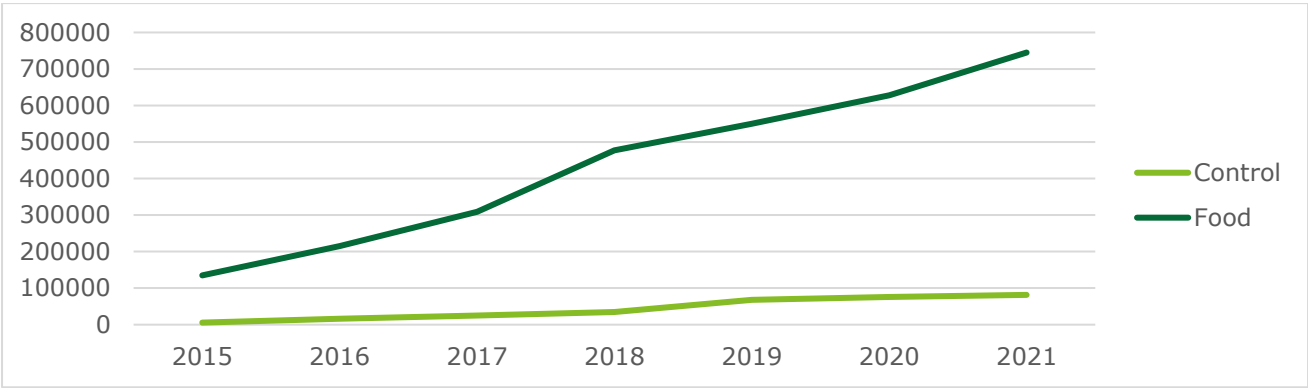


Figure 36: Profit before taxes

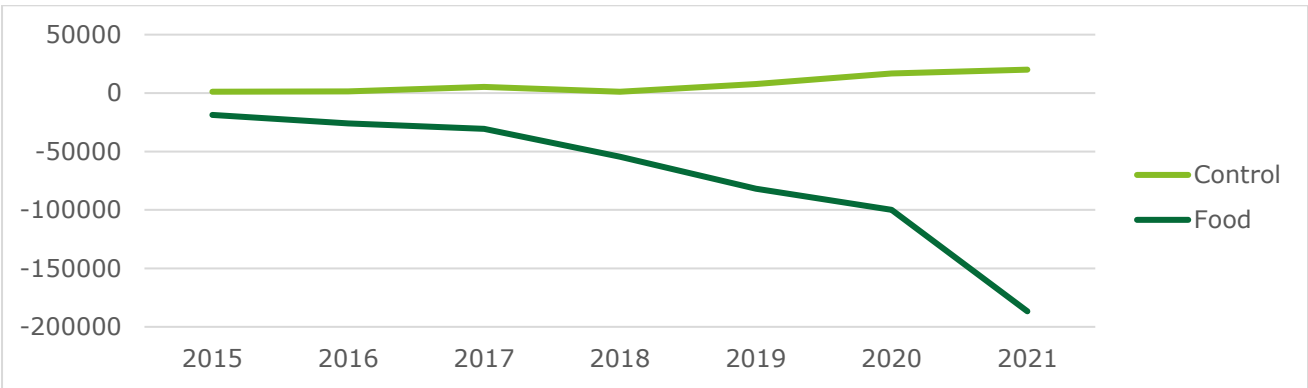


Table 17: Results of the analysis for the variable; Total assets (2016)

Variable	Coefficient	P> z
Total assets (2016)	6.07 e-07**	0.014
Profit before taxes (2016)	-3.42 e-07	0.715

Table 18: Results of the analysis for the variable; Growth of total assets (2017- 2021)

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of total assets (2017-2021)	388 549	71 444	459 993***	2.58
Growth of profit before taxes (2017-2021)	-161 446	187 051	-348 497**	-1.97

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

Conclusion: The KIC has performed well in many aspects, particularly in aligning with call ambitions, innovative ecosystem development, and overall financial sustainability. The KIC has performed particularly well in generating income from incubation and acceleration support. Its systematic approach to addressing societal challenges is commendable. However, areas such as financial sustainability and underperformance in the education sector warrant attention to further enhance its effectiveness in achieving societal impact and sustainability. EIT Food's systematic approach in overcoming barriers, leveraging strategic inputs, generating valuable outputs, and achieving short and long-term outcomes has been instrumental in creating a sustainable innovation ecosystem. By actively addressing societal challenges, bridging skill gaps, and fostering transparency, the KIC has not only created an effective ecosystem but has also significantly impacted the food sector. Its adaptability, inclusivity, and resilience make it a dynamic force in shaping the future of the food industry.

13.2. Visible innovation ecosystems

Indicator: KIC has made evidenced progress against the following indicator (as per definition provided in the EIT Impact Framework): Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence

As per definition in the EIT Impact Framework, an innovation ecosystem is a highly symbiotic (players are highly dependent on each other's inputs and outputs) network of researchers, educators/trainers and companies interacting in a specific area (location and theme) for the generation of new research, development and innovation. Innovation ecosystems are identifiable e.g., through the outputs (for example in a specific area of R&I) they produce and the relationships of members of the ecosystem. They are less mature and business-oriented compared with "business ecosystems". Innovation ecosystems are likely to be associated with CLCs but could also emerge in other locations where KICs are active.

EIT Food aims to catalyse innovation and create visible innovation ecosystems within the food sector.

In 2020, EIT Food emphasized the significance of its network of partners, which among the supported start-ups and the higher education institutions collectively form a robust innovation ecosystem. The organization has cultivated partnerships across various sectors, including businesses, technology innovators, research

institutions, educators, farmers, and consumers, thus covering the entire food value chain. This collaborative approach is in line with the EIT Impact Framework's focus on fostering innovation ecosystems.

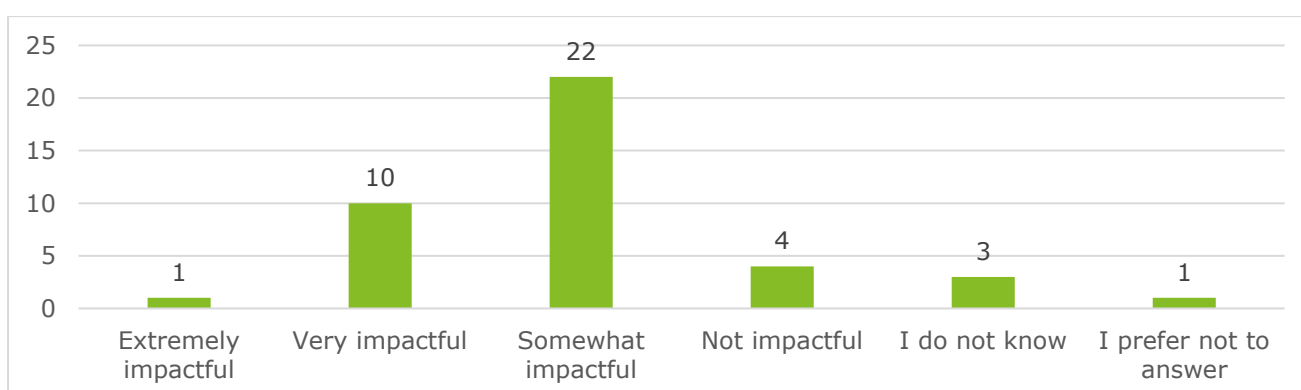
EIT Food's actions in mobilizing and internationalizing national and regional networks align with the goal of strengthening innovation ecosystems. By leveraging the EIT Knowledge Triangle approach and actively engaging with local players, EIT Food is contributing to the development of innovation ecosystems in different regions.

The establishment of EIT Hubs in innovation hotspots like Silicon Valley and Tel Aviv, demonstrates a commitment to exchanging knowledge and fostering synergies with existing advanced innovation ecosystems. This initiative aligns with the idea of learning from and connecting with established innovation hubs, which can contribute to the development of new innovation ecosystems.

EIT Food's support for start-ups, including its wide networks such as the RisingFoodStars Association, demonstrates a practical approach to nurturing innovation ecosystems. By facilitating the growth and development of start-ups, EIT Food contributes to the diversification and expansion of the food innovation ecosystem.

The KIC report for 2021-2022 highlights substantial support for start-ups, resulting in significant external funding attracted by start-ups and the establishment of the FoodSparks fund. The support provided to start-ups and their subsequent success in attracting funding is a clear indicator of the impact of EIT Food in fostering innovation within the food sector. This demonstrates progress in building visible innovation ecosystems.

Figure 37: How impactful partners find the innovation ecosystems developed by EIT Food



The survey feedback from KIC partners, indicating that the innovation ecosystems developed by EIT Food are found to be impactful, further supports the notion that EIT Food has made strides in creating visible and effective innovation ecosystems.

Conclusion: Based on the information gathered, EIT Food has indeed made evidenced progress against the indicator "Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence." The KIC's strong partnerships, efforts to mobilize regional networks, establishment of innovation hubs, support for start-ups, and the positive feedback from partners all align with the objectives of fostering visible and impactful innovation ecosystems within the food sector. EIT Food's commitment to nurturing innovation and collaboration across various stakeholders has contributed to the development of new and thriving innovation ecosystems in the food industry, marking significant progress according to the EIT Impact Framework.

13.3. Financial Sustainability Strategy

Indicator: Effective Financial Sustainability Strategy, including Financial Sustainability mechanisms in place including diversified revenue sources and aligned with the original proposal and subsequent business plans/reports

KICs Financial Sustainability (FS) Strategies should follow the criteria and requirements set out by the GB of the EIT⁴². These include diversification of revenue sources, incorporating the strategy within all KAVA's, and developing a commercialization strategy for each innovation activity, as well as annual reporting on the progress of the strategy.

EIT Food's journey towards achieving financial sustainability has been characterized by a concerted effort to create a robust strategy and a diversified set of revenue sources in alignment with its original proposal and subsequent business plans and reports. This has been guided by the principles and recommendations outlined in various documents, including the EIT Position Paper on Financial Sustainability (2020), the Governing Board decisions, Business Plans, and several annual reports.

The core principle of financial sustainability, as defined in the EIT Position Paper, revolves around a KIC's capacity to generate sufficient revenue to support its ecosystem and knowledge triangle activities independently from EIT funding. This principle emphasizes the importance of financial independence for KICs while discouraging excessive reliance on EIT funds. To achieve this goal, EIT Food has adopted a multifaceted approach.

EIT Food has made significant strides in diversifying its revenue sources. These sources encompass a wide range of funding avenues, including membership fees, alternative funding from public and private sources, contributions from partner organizations, voluntary contributions from Member States, royalties from intellectual property rights, capital endowments, and more. This diversification is in line with the EIT Regulation and Strategic Agenda, which encourages KICs to attract a broad spectrum of financial support.

EIT Food recognizes the importance of gradually reducing its dependency on EIT funding. As outlined in the Governing Board decisions, the EIT contribution to a KIC should not exceed 25% of its overall funding. This commitment to reducing reliance on EIT funds is aligned with the principle of financial sustainability. EIT Food has developed and implemented a comprehensive financial sustainability strategy. This strategy includes a focus on the gradual reduction of EIT funding, the development of revenue-generating activities, and a commitment to aligning with the EIT's guidelines for performance-based financing.

EIT Food has invested in innovation projects and start-ups, aiming to achieve a return on investment (ROI) and create a diverse mix of revenue streams. The use of tools like SAFEs (Simple Agreement for Future Equity) has proven successful, resulting in a growing portfolio of equity investments.

EIT Food has emphasized the importance of producing market-ready innovation and driving adoption among consumers and businesses. This focus on tangible outcomes contributes to the long-term financial sustainability of the organization.

The KIC has implemented a system of continuous monitoring and periodic audited financial statements to assess its progress toward financial sustainability. This commitment to accountability ensures that strategies are adapted and refined as needed.

EIT Food actively seeks collaboration with various stakeholders, including European, national, and international institutions and organizations. These collaborations not only contribute to financial sustainability but also strengthen EIT Food's position in the European innovation landscape.

⁴² For more information see: Decision 4/2015 and Decision 13/2021 of the GB of the EIT.

Conclusion: EIT Food has embarked on a well-structured road toward achieving financial sustainability. By diversifying revenue sources, gradually reducing reliance on EIT funding, investing in innovation, and maintaining a focus on market-ready solutions, the organization has made significant progress in aligning its financial sustainability strategy with its original proposal and subsequent business plans. Even though there are still some room to further stabilize financial sustainability, as the data gathered through our evaluation the continuous monitoring and collaboration with various stakeholders enhance its prospects for long-term financial sustainability.

13.4. Revenues

Indicator: An adequate level of revenues from its activities is demonstrated and a plan for the management and exploitation of intellectual property and financial assets supporting the KIC's business model is in place

EIT Food has made significant strides towards achieving financial sustainability by generating significant revenues and effectively managing its intellectual property (IP) and financial assets. This conclusion is based on a comprehensive analysis of various documents, assessments, and interviews pertaining to EIT Food's operations and strategies.

The key non-EIT revenues of the KIC came from membership fees and alternative funding, while a number of other categories underperformed, which indicates that the income diversity was below the KIC Business Plans' and KIC Strategic Agendas' targets.

Tab 19 includes revenue targets as per the EIT Food Strategic Agendas, while some target values in annual and multi-annual Business Plans were revised upwards (the BP respective target values in brackets).

Table 19: KIC Revenue targets and achieved 2018-2023

EIT FOOD REVENUE (EUR)	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved *
ROI and equity	-	-	-	-	-	-	550,000 (670,624)	629,608	1,700,000 (1,942,000)	175,437	2,500,000	96,195
Education	12,500	3,600	20,000	11,304	20,000	67,104	250,000	76,322	350,000 (500,000)	130,001	425,000	95,806
Services and consulting	-	9,371	10,000	11,536	5,000	7,641	50,000 (55,000)	33,528	200,000 (510,000)	342,820	700,000	281,650
Membership fees	3,750,000	3,950,000	4,000,000	4,180,100	4,400,000	4,852,000	4,000,000	5,043,000	4,000,000	4,406,500	4,000,000	1,488,000
Alternative funding sources	325,000	381,874	265,000	373,980	412,000	422,500	500,000 (723,100)	1,032,396	500,000 (766,950)	1,117,912	1,000,000	441,801

*Validated data as of August 2023

EIT Food has exhibited a strong commitment to achieving financial sustainability, as outlined in its Strategic Agenda for 2021-2027. The organization has recognized the importance of reducing its dependence on EIT grants and diversifying its revenue streams.

EIT Food has demonstrated steady revenue growth over the years. Membership fees have been a primary source of income, reflecting the weight forecasted in the Business Plan. Additionally, the organization has successfully attracted alternative funding sources from both public and private sectors. EIT Food's financial performance has consistently met or exceeded expectations. It has overperformed in several revenue areas, such as membership fees, alternative funding sources and service and consulting fees.

The organization has established Financial Sustainability (FS) agreements for its various KAVAs, ensuring that financial sustainability is embedded in its core activities. While facing challenges in generating revenue from equity investments, EIT Food recognizes the need to structure its equity portfolio for future revenue streams. The recruitment of venture capital specialists is planned to address this issue.

EIT Food's approach to revenue diversification has evolved, with a focus on circularity and multiple revenue streams, including alternative funding sources, partnerships, and grant opportunities. The KIC is working to make its educational programmes self-sufficient, although it acknowledges that this goal is challenging due to competition within the EIT community. EIT Food aims to strike a balance between achieving financial sustainability and fulfilling its social and environmental impact goals, recognizing that some impact-driven initiatives may not have immediate commercial revenue.

EIT Food has established a robust intellectual property (IP) management framework to support its objectives. Key aspects of its IP management approach include. EIT Food's IP Policy aligns with Horizon Europe and EIT regulations, fostering collaboration among business enterprises, educational institutions, and research organizations. It encourages the effective implementation of projects and the exploitation of results. As a principle, IP rights are owned by the institution employing the inventor, but access rights are granted to other partners if needed for joint EIT Food-funded projects. This ensures the operational responsibility for IP remains with EIT Food partners. Model agreement templates have been developed and distributed to partners, ensuring compliance with Horizon Europe rules and facilitating IP protection and exploitation. EIT Food offers support for SMEs and start-ups to protect and commercialize their intellectual assets.

Conclusion: EIT Food's aspiration for effective IP management is marked by significant progress and a commitment to adapting its strategies to meet its goals by diversifying revenue streams, enhancing IP management. The key non-EIT revenues of the KIC came from membership fees and alternative funding, while a number of other categories underperformed, which indicates insufficient diversity of income. In accordance with the conclusions of the GB Rapporteur visit of 2023, further efforts are needed to diversify its incomes and counterbalance the dominance of Membership Fees.

13.5. Financial Sustainability

Indicator: Financial Sustainability (FS): revenues of KIC LE, FS coefficient

In 2021-2022, EIT Food reported revenues from various sources, with membership fees being the largest contributor (73% of total revenues), followed by alternative funding sources (16% of total revenues), services and consulting (3% of total revenues). EIT Food overperformed its revenue target in 2021-2022, with a total revenue figure of EUR 12,98 million, which was only approximately 3% below the BP2021-2022 target.

The 2021-22 financial sustainability coefficient (FS coefficient) was reported as 12.59%, exceeding the expected level of 12.32%. This suggests that EIT Food was able to generate a portion of its revenues from sources other than EIT funding. In the first half of 2022, EIT Food primarily relied on membership fees (96% of accumulated revenue) and saw a stable increase in revenue from these fees, surpassing the target for 2022.

However, the KIC faced weaknesses in the form of underperformance in other revenue categories such as ROI and equity, educational services, and services and consulting fees. These underperformances indicated a lack of revenue diversification.

EIT Food had set financial sustainability targets in its strategic agenda, aiming to finance its knowledge triangle activities independently of contributions from the EIT. This involved developing revenue-generating strategies and tapping into various sources of funding. In line with these aspirations, the Education team was established by the KIC, which was able to significantly contribute to the KIC's business development for the B2B market and increase revenues to EUR 250,000 and secure EUR 780,000 in non-EIT funded activities for the next four years.

While EIT Food reported an overperformance in certain revenue categories such as ROI and equity or education, it faced challenges in meeting FS requirements, particularly for Innovation and Research KAVAs and Business Creation KAVAs, where not all KAVAs had a valid FS mechanism in place.

The FS strategy appeared ambitious, but the operationalization was under restructuring, and secured financing was considered insufficient.

EIT Food's greatest strategic risk was identified as finding non-EIT funding sources to offset the known decline in EIT grant funding, especially in the final four years of the framework agreement (2021 – 2024).

EIT Food demonstrated a mixed financial sustainability performance over the years, with overperformance in certain categories like membership fees and alternative funding sources. However, weaknesses were evident in underperforming revenue categories such as educational services and services and consulting fees. The FS coefficient showed variations but generally exceeded expectations, indicating a capacity to generate non-EIT revenues.

To achieve long-term financial sustainability, EIT Food faced challenges in meeting FS requirements for all KAVAs and finding additional funding sources beyond EIT grants. The organization recognized the need to diversify its revenue streams and improve the performance of its equity and financial return mechanisms. Furthermore, achieving financial sustainability beyond EIT grants was identified as a key challenge, especially as the EIT grant was expected to decrease over time.

Conclusion: Although the KIC has exceeded its set targets in revenues generated from membership fees and alternative funding sources, it has significantly underperformed in generating revenues from education and ROI. According to the GB Rapporteur visit of 2023, EIT Food has developed partnerships and made systematic changes in order to attract greater investment returns and improve its financial independence from EIT grants, which indicates a positive change for the future, however it has not yet been reflected in meeting the financial targets.

13.6. Co-funding rates

Indicator: Co-funding rates

The co-funding rate is the percentage of the EIT funding that makes up the entire KAVA budget.

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 introduces gradually decreasing EIT co-funding rates of eligible costs of KIC activities set out in their Business Plans in order to increase the levels of private and public funding in order to facilitate the KICs in the transition towards financial sustainability. The funding model incentivizes KICs to gradually decrease the share of EIT co-funding of eligible costs in their Business Plan while increasing the level of co-funding from non-EIT sources. Therefore, fixed decreasing co-funding rates have been applied across phases of the entire KIC life cycle as laid down in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027. According to The EIT SIA 2021-2027 the EIT's contribution is EUR 2.854.000.000 (about 96% of the total EIT budget) is planned to finance existing and new KICs. This indicates that EIT funding is intended to be a majority share of a KIC's financial resources.

The target co-funding rate for KIC's over time is outlined in the table below:

Table 20: EIT co-funding rate

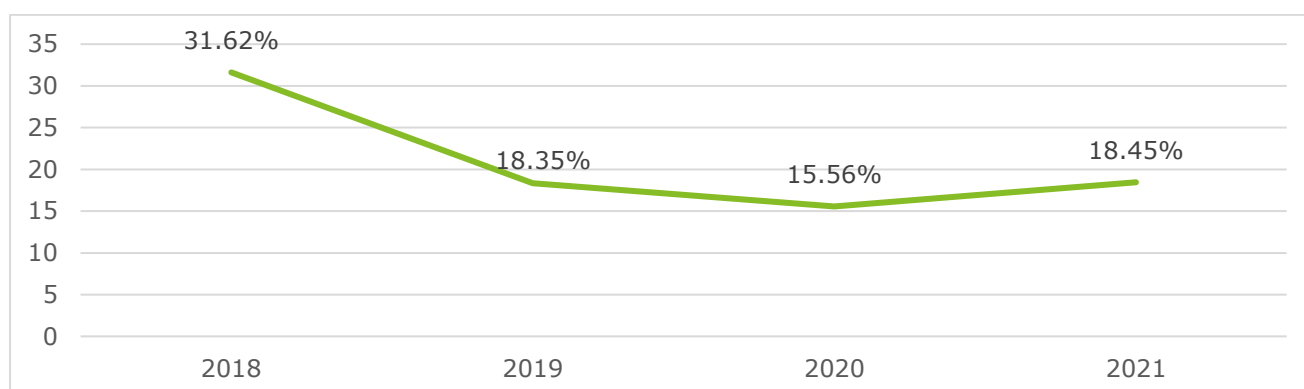
Phase	Start-Up	Ramp-Up	Maturity	Exit from EIT Grant
Years	1-4	5-7	8-11	12-15
EIT Co-funding rate	Up to 100%	Up to 80%	Up to 70%	50% at year 12, decreasing by 10 percentage points per annum

In the context of the portfolio management, the cascading model and the multi-annual nature of KIC Business Plans, the co-funding rates will be translated into single reimbursement rates (SRR) of eligible costs to be included in the grant agreements. The co-funding provided by third parties receiving financial support will contribute to meeting the co-funding requirements in line with the eligibility rules of Horizon Europe grants.

Some KIC activities, due to their specific nature, might receive more favourable funding conditions. These could include Cross-KIC activities, EIT Regional Innovation Scheme activities, and initiatives supporting the higher education sector. There has been a decrease in the percentage of non-absorbed funds over the years, which indicates improved financial management. However, the absolute value of non-absorbed funds remains significant. There has been a positive trend in reducing error rates, suggesting better financial control and reporting.

Co-funding rates have seen fluctuations over the years. In 2018, the co-funding rate was relatively high, but it decreased significantly in 2019 and remained low till 2021.

Figure 38: Co-funding rate over the years



Conclusion: EIT Food's co-funding rates and financial sustainability measures demonstrate a clear commitment to gradually reducing reliance on the EIT financial contribution to KIC activities over time. The emphasis is on encouraging KICs to secure a larger share of their funding from external sources to ensure their long-term viability. While there have been fluctuations in co-funding rates over the years, the trend seems to be moving towards a more balanced funding model. This approach aims to enhance financial management, reduce error rates, and ultimately contribute to the sustainability of EIT Food. However, the challenge lies in striking the right balance between EIT's support and the ability of KICs to secure adequate co-funding from other sources to continue their activities effectively.

13.7. Financial assets valuation

Indicator: Financial asset valuation

In 2021, EIT Food self-reported 32 investments in 26 start-ups through SAFE (Simple Agreement for Future Equity) agreements and revenue-based financing, totalling EUR 8.5 million. Additionally, KIC started building an investment portfolio in 2020, supporting start-ups through various activities. The value of these agreements with supported start-ups was EUR 1,773,681.

The current fair value of EIT Food's equity portfolio was self-reported at EUR 5.4 million, representing a multiple of 1.3x and an IRR (Internal Rate of Return) of 16.5%. However, there was no reconciliation with EIT Food's 2021 financial statements regarding this valuation. Furthermore, there was insufficient reconciliation of self-reported financial instruments with the statutory financial statements.

In 2021, the financial fixed assets reported in EIT Food's statutory financial statements equalled EUR 6,173, with an increase of EUR 4,118 compared to 2020, primarily due to acquisitions through affiliated companies. Shares validated under other financial assets in 2021 were only EUR 5, up from 0 in 2020. No other financial assets were reported, and there was a lack of accompanying explanations on how these financial assets were capitalized.

In 2022, EIT Food continued to increase its financial assets portfolio, primarily through SAFE contracts and other agreements. However, despite this increase, there were concerns about the value and the number of financial assets relative to EIT Food's status as a third-wave Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC). The valuation methodology used for these assets was not well-documented or reconciled with the audited financial statements.

Conclusion: EIT Food's financial assets portfolio has been growing, but there are notable weaknesses in terms of its value, documentation, and there is no reconciliation with audited financial statements to confirm their credibility. While there is a positive trend in increasing the number of financial assets, their significance remains limited, especially for a third-wave KIC. Additionally, successful exits from these investments are not expected in the short to mid-term, which suggests a low contribution to EIT Food's financial sustainability. The provided data are based on audited financial statements but lack clarity in terms of the valuation method used, which raises concerns about the credibility of the reported financial assets. Overall, EIT Food's financial assets portfolio, while growing, faces challenges in terms of value and documentation.

13.8. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

Strengths
EIT Food has successfully diversified its revenue sources, including membership fees, alternative funding, service and consulting fees, and educational services. This diversification helps reduce dependency on EIT funding and ensures a steady income stream.
EIT Food has met or exceeded most of its revenue targets. Notably, it overperformed in categories like membership fees and alternative funding sources, demonstrating its ability to attract funding from various sectors.
EIT Food has developed and implemented a comprehensive financial sustainability strategy, which includes gradually reducing reliance on the EIT funding, focusing on revenue-generating activities, and aligning with the EIT's guidelines for performance-based financing.
EIT Food has established a robust intellectual property (IP) management framework, ensuring effective collaboration among stakeholders and the exploitation of results. This approach supports its financial sustainability goals.

The following table indicates the most significant weaknesses and recommendations:

Weaknesses	Recommendations
Revenue Diversification Challenges	EIT Food should conduct a comprehensive analysis of its underperforming revenue categories, such as educational services and services and consulting fees. Identify the root causes of underperformance and develop targeted strategies to enhance revenue generation in these areas. This may involve refining existing offerings, exploring new markets, or adjusting pricing structures to make these services more attractive to stakeholders.
Dependency on EIT Funding	To reduce dependency on EIT funding, EIT Food should accelerate efforts to secure additional funding from diverse sources, including public and private sectors, grants, and partnerships. Develop a clear roadmap for gradually decreasing the reliance on EIT grants while maintaining the quality and impact of its activities. Continuously monitor progress toward this goal and make necessary adjustments to ensure financial sustainability.
Financial Sustainability in Specific KAVAs	EIT Food should maintain the established financial sustainability mechanisms across all KIC thematic areas. Conduct a thorough assessment of the financial sustainability status in each area and work collaboratively with partners to develop and implement mechanisms in all areas. With these mechanisms it could be ensured that financial sustainability becomes and remains an integral part of every project's strategic planning and operations.
Equity Portfolio Performance	Maintain the reviewed approach to funding opportunities the KIC's equity portfolio and partnering with venture capital specialists or financial experts as renewed in late 2023. Focus on optimizing the return on investment (ROI) from equity investments by actively supporting and mentoring start-ups in its portfolio. Explore opportunities to diversify the equity portfolio further and aim for successful exits that contribute significantly to revenue.

14. ANNEXES

14.1. ANNEX I. Overview of achieved impact indicators

KIC Strategic Objective	Societal and economic impact to be created by 2027	Impact Indicator	Targets to be achieved by 2024	Targets to be achieved by 2027	Achieved 2023
SO1-- Address low consumer trust in food	Improvement in conditions for enhanced public trust arising from participation in the food system-- Increased public engagement in food system	# people taking part in EIT Food co-creation activities	12,000	20,000	n/a
SO2-- Enabling healthier and more sustainable individual consumer choice	Reduction in relative risk®) of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors	# EIT Food supported products on the market with levels of salt &/ or free sugars &/or trans & saturated fats reduced to, or below, recommended Food	12	20	28
	Reduction in relative risk® (R) of obesity & Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors	# consumers using technology, products or guidance developed with the support of EIT Food to personalise or change diet in line with relevant Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Europe.	2,000	4,000	9,00–
SO3 - Build a consumer-centric connected food system		# new digital solutions in use to improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency.	10	20	29
	Improved Food Safety & Security	# new digital solutions in use to improve supply chain efficiency,	10	20	25

KIC Strategic Objective	Societal and economic impact to be created by 2027	Impact Indicator	Targets to be achieved by 2024	Targets to be achieved by 2027	Achieved 2023
		integrity and/or transparency			
	Increased adoption & uptake of innovation in the food system	# new digital solutions in use to improve supply chain efficiency, integrity and/or transparency	10	20	25
SO4 – Enhance sustainability through resource stewardship	Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food systems	Volume reduction in CO2 equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system	8m t CO2 eq reduction in CO2 equivalent tonnes within key stages identified in food product/ category Life Cycle Analysis	18m t CO2 eq reduction in CO2 equivalent tonnes within key stages identified in food product/ category Life Cycle Analysis	28 solutions identified from innovation - evaluation of impact forecast is underway
		# new products or processes launched with EIT Food support using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams.	15	40	15
		# EIT Food supported products on the market derived from alternative sources (e.g. alternative proteins; new plant varieties; alternative production techniques, etc.)	15	40	18
		# EIT Food supported products on the market derived from	15	40	12

KIC Strategic Objective	Societal and economic impact to be created by 2027	Impact Indicator	Targets to be achieved by 2024	Targets to be achieved by 2027	Achieved 2023
		alternative sources (e.g. alternative proteins; new plant varieties; alternative production techniques, etc.)			
	Reduction in Food Waste & Food Loss	# new products or processes launched with EIT Food support using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams.	15	40	15
	Improved Environmental Impact of Agri-Food systems - Improvement in impact on ecosystems due to factors identified as EU Green Deal and/ or CAP targets (inter alia water quality and use; use of chemical pesticides; antimicrobial use; nutrient loss; biodiversity protection)	# new products or processes launched with EIT Food support using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food systems side-streams and waste streams	15	40	10
S05 – Educate to engage, innovate and advance and attract new talent to the food sector	Enabling Transition to a Circular & Sustainable Economy	% of alumni of KIC Education activities retained in the food system.	85%	90%	n/a
		new skills and professions developed	8	12	8
S06 – Catalyse food sector entrepreneurship and innovation	Improvement in food system contribution to outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework (including inter alia waste management,	# new entrepreneurs supported by EIT Food and starting a new business within 3 years	60	180	n/a

KIC Strategic Objective	Societal and economic impact to be created by 2027	Impact Indicator	Targets to be achieved by 2024	Targets to be achieved by 2027	Achieved 2023
	recycling, competitiveness & innovation)	# start-ups and scale ups supported by EIT Food trading and reporting 1.5X increased revenue 3 years after support ceased	30	100	n/a
	Food Innovation ecosystems are created, and they evolve into business ecosystems	Visible innovation ecosystems not previously in existence developed with the support of EIT Food	5	7	5 (the 6 th was due to launch in 2023)

14.2. ANNEX II. Methodological tools

Desk research

The goal of the desk research was to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the KIC's activities, impact and results. The key documents for the desk research were:

- Key EIT documents (e.g., old EIT Regulation (2008), EIT Regulation Amendment (2013), new EIT Regulation (2021), EIT Financial Regulation, EIT SIA 2014-2020 and EIT SIA 2021-2027, Triennial Work Programmes, Single Programming Documents);
- Calls for KIC Proposals documentation; KIC Proposals;
- Framework Partnership Agreements, new Partnership Agreements and KICs' Strategic Agendas (originals and any later updates);
- KICs Business Plans and Reports for relevant years and experts' assessments;
- KIC Assessments: Business Creation, Education, Knowledge Triangle integration, and subsequent RIS evaluations;
- EIT consolidated reports on the KIC Monitoring/GB Rapporteur visits and reports;
- Specific EIT guidance to KICs (e.g. governance, code of conduct, etc.);
- EIT Principles on KICs' Financial Sustainability (old and new);
- EIT Guidance on the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) 2018-2020 and EIT RIS Implementation Framework 2021-2027;
- EIT Good Governance Principles and respective assessments;

- EIT and KICs websites (deliverables included in websites as well as those submitted with KIC reports);
- KICs' action plans for tackling specific issues (i.e. EIT and EU co-branding; communications strategy; Project Partners, gender balance etc.).
- Annual Grant KIC Performance Assessment Reports;
- Multi-annual Dashboard;
- Annual Grant KIC Performance Assessment Reports;
- EIT GB Strategic Recommendations issued during the assessed period;
- EIT GB Rapporteur Reports;
- Communications Activities Assessments;
- Publicly available relevant EU documents

Additional documents and databases have been collected from / provided by EIT and the KIC and assessed during the desk research. This assessment has included outstanding recommendations from the most recent relevant reports produced through annual EIT monitoring, such as the Good Governance Principles assessments and Multi-Annual Dashboards.

Throughout the overview of the documents, we have opted for a tree structure to log each document into a database and do a first rough screening of relevance, indicating the following in the database:

- The level of documentation (EIT general, cross-KICs, KIC-specific – including the respective KIC, etc.);
- The assessment criteria and indicators to which it is (potentially) relevant, based on the assessment criteria from the methodological note;
- The level in the Horizon Europe impact pathway to which the data is (potentially) relevant, based on the EIT Impact Framework.

After the collection of the documents, we have continued with their analysis.

Document Analysis

We have systematically reviewed each document using the database developed as part of the desk research. During this review we have added further data to each relevant indicator (i.e. if the in-depth review of document X proves to be relevant to assessment criteria/indicators not identified during the fast screening, carried out in the previous activity, this will be updated in the database).

Whilst going through each document, we extracted relevant information on the KIC performances, linking it simultaneously to the areas to be covered by the report. We have subsequently created a matrix to link the data for each year which ensures that data gaps can be easily identified. Once all the data has been grouped using this approach, we have analysed the data using the following methods:

- **Synthesis of text** – In instances where the documents already contained elements of analysis of the performance, this text has been synthesised and reported directly as findings, with full sourcing.
- **Qualitative content analysis** – In instances where data has been presented in direct qualitative manners, the analysis has consisted of finding overall trends and tendencies, patterns and links in these documents based on which overarching summaries and findings have been drawn.
- **Quantitative analysis** – In documents containing quantitative data, the data has been combined with further quantitative data analysis, or in some cases (e.g. KPIs) data was considered as standalone and indicative.

Surveys

We have developed, and with the help of the EIT Food distributed, three unique sets of questionnaires for the following target groups:

- Survey of students and graduates from EIT labelled programs and non-labelled programs;

- Survey of start-ups and scale-ups supported by the KIC;
- Survey of partners.

Surveys typically provide more statistically significant data and in that way lead to more objective results. The questionnaire aimed to build upon the collected information as to complete and enrich understanding from the initial desk research. We have sent the surveys before dissemination to the respective EIT officers for feedback and validation of the questions. All questionnaires have been open for responses for three consecutive weeks, during which we have prepared reminders in order to boost the response rates. The partners survey reached very good, 28% response rate while start-up and graduates survey reached acceptable response rates.

Semi-structured interviews

To gain further information, semi-structured interviews have been carried out both in a written and oral form with EIT Food representatives, namely Richard Zaltzman, Jente Schoutens and Jayne Brookman to complement the data collected during the desk research. The interview questions were always sent to the KIC before the interview providing them the possibility to send us written answers and prepare the data or information. As we have received written answers, the oral part of the first interview were only included follow-up and clarification questions. In the second interview we have focused on deepening our understanding on the KIC operations and validating the results of the surveys, most importantly the graduates survey results. These interviews provided in-depth qualitative data that allowed for data verification and triangulation.

Multi criteria analysis

In line with the EC's Better Regulation Guidelines and its toolbox⁴³, carrying out a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) have been utilized to assess overall possible alternatives and preferences and evaluate them under different criteria at the same time.

The MCA as a methodological tool have been suitable to conduct a comparison of different options (including a baseline scenario) vis-à-vis a predefined set of criteria. This tool builds on the data collected carried out in the context of the project – including the desk research, the targeted surveys and interviews - to assess various options. Then, based on this assessment, each option receives a score per criteria corresponding to the extent to which each option would be more or less efficient and effective than the established baseline. These scores are then used to develop the comparison of options amongst themselves, in order to reach and conclude on a ranking of preferred options for this study.

Our MCA consisted of three successive steps:

- Assessment of the options with regards to the assessment criteria (including the allocation of base scores);
- Outranking matrix;
- Permutation matrix.

Theory-based impact evaluation

Theory-based impact evaluation have been utilized to assess cause and effect between interventions and outcomes in a more detailed manner, zooming in on the various elements within an intervention and taking into account potential impactful external factors as well. Theory based evaluation is an approach to evaluation and not a specific method or technique. It is a way of structuring and undertaking analysis in an evaluation. Theory based approaches to evaluation attempt to understand an intervention's contribution to

⁴³ [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox](#)

observed results through a mechanistic or process interpretation of causation, rather than determining causation through comparison to a counterfactual, as discussed in the section above.

Counterfactual impact evaluation– Propensity Score Matching

Counterfactual impact evaluation enables us to estimate more reliably the impact of the EIT Food by comparing the outcomes of interest of those who have participated in their programme(s) or benefited from their support – the treated group – with those who are similar to the treatment group in all of their characteristics, only difference being that they have not participated in the program – the control or comparison group. We received the data on the enterprises from D&B Hoovers. The number of the treated enterprises identified in the D&B database was 45, compared to the number of control enterprises of 975. The construction of the control group followed the following steps:

We received for a random sample of control enterprises, with similar distribution as for the supported enterprises, based on:

- the country of operation;
- number of employees: min 0, max 50;
- sales revenue: min 0 max 6M EUR;
- the sector of operation;
- number of years in operation (year of foundation: min 2014 max 2019);
- total assets min:0 max: 20 M EUR.

After the creation of the treated and control groups, we performed a propensity score matching. This is a quasi-experimental method, using probit regression. Based on the collected data, it calculates a propensity score for each individual that indicates their probability to be subject to the support. The individuals from the treatment group then have been matched to the individuals from the control group based on their characteristics (the sector of operation, years of operation, total assets in 2016). Finally, the average treatment effect of a scheme is calculated as the mean difference in the outcomes between the two groups. The effects were calculated on the total assets (to measure the effects on the investments), net sales, profit before taxes and the number of employees in 2021. The comprehensive results of the analysis can be found in Annex III., the text of the report contains only the main conclusions for net sales and the number of employees, while those were paired to the relevant indicators (*contribution to revenue growth of organizations trading or employing innovations developed with the KIC support and the number and revenue of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KICs trading 3 years after KIC support ceased*).

Survival analysis

Only one indicator has been identified under the Societal and Economic Impact KPIs where we were able to exploit the survival analysis, namely:

- Number and revenue of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KIC trading 3 years after KIC support ceased.

In our offer previously we have also identified the indicator *alumni retained in the food system* as a possible target for survival analysis, but as we were not able to gather sufficient data on the treated group at several points in time, due to the historical irresponsiveness of the KIC alumni we have not been able to proceed with the survival analysis regarding this indicator.

We analysed the effect of the EIT support on the survival rate of the enterprises through a probit regression model. The outcome variable was the operation of the enterprise (0 if out of business 1 if in operation). The explanatory variables were: the EIT KIC support (1 if supported, 0 if not), the sectors the enterprise operates/operated, the age of the enterprise, the total assets, the revenue, the profit and the number of employees. If the coefficient of the EIT KIC support significantly positive, the support increased the probability of the supported enterprises' survival rate and vice versa. The treated and the control groups were the same as for the counterfactual impact evaluation.

Network analysis

Two indicators have been identified under KIC's achievements in attracting new members from across the Union, where we were able to apply network analysis:

- KIC has grown to an effective sustainable innovation eco-system with partners within and outside the EU, including RIS countries and regions;
- Share of indicated innovation ecosystems that covers RIS eligible countries.

Our network analysis in a separate report will be focused on the patterns of relationships between the nodes, in this case organizations, and links between them (which organizations are connected and the strength of these connections). It has been based on an assumption that through time organizations develop formal and informal connections with other organizations, which then play an important role in determining the information flows and success of interaction in specific areas.

Triangulation, conclusions and recommendations

Through this task we addressed data findings from the aforementioned collection and, if necessary, we will complete it with any additional findings from further consultations with EIT Food representatives and further requested documents, databases, to reach solid conclusions. By comparing and aggregating all information gathered, we were able to formulate relevant recommendations.

14.3. ANNEX III. Overview of the results of the counterfactual impact evaluation and survival analysis

General description of the data

We received the data on company statements for the period 2014-2023 from Dun & Bradstreet. We had the data for 1308 companies, among which 1020 were either financially supported by the Food-KIC or selected as control for the impact evaluation and the survival analysis.

Control	975
Food	45
Grand Total	1020

The control group was selected based on the size (threshold: minimum and maximum revenues and employees), the industry and the geographical location (country level). After the creation of the database, data cleaning and restructuring, we conducted a counterfactual impact evaluation based on the propensity score matching procedure.

The first step was to prepare the matching of the assisted and the control enterprises. This was based on the industry, the age of the start-up and 4 financial indicators in 2016: total assets, net sales, profit before tax and the number of employees. The outcome variables were the growth of the same indicators between 2017-2021. Though we had the 2022 and 2023 data, those were very limited, since in some countries the reporting periods within the year differs. Thus, we excluded these datasets from our evaluation to keep the consistency and to not distort the final figures.

The results of the counterfactual impact evaluation:

First, we calculated the propensity scores of the enterprises, which also revealed how the different indicators influenced the probability of receiving funds from the KIC.

Pseudo R2 = 0.1505

Variable	Coefficient	P> z
Sector – Agriculture, Forestry, And Fishing	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Mining, Construction	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Manufacturing 1	0.62	0.174
Sector – Manufacturing 2	2.36***	0.000
Sector – Transportation, Communications, Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Wholesale & Retail Trade	0.11	0.711
Sector – Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	0.19*	0.083
Sector – Services	0.007	0.964
Age of the enterprise (years)	0.11***	0.009
Total assets (2016)	6.07 e-07**	0.014
Net sales (2016)	-2.22 e-07	0.945
Profit before taxes (2016)	-3.42 e-07	0.715
Number of employees (2016)	0.008	0.796
Constant	-2.62	0.000

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

The results shows that sectors such as manufacturing (and to some extent finance) were more relevant for the KIC to support than others. The age of the enterprises also had a positive correlation with the probability of being supported, meaning older companies tend to have a higher chance of being supported than younger enterprises do. The total assets of the companies also had a positive correlation with the probability of the support. This correlation depicts a situation where enterprises with already higher total assets are more likely to receive funds from the KIC.

We calculated the growth differences of the assisted (treated) enterprises and the matched control enterprises in order to determine whether these differences in growth are significant measured at the usual significance levels.

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of total assets (2017-2021)	388 549	71 444	459 993***	2.58
Growth of net sales (2017-2021)	162 564	57 281	105 282	1.02
Growth of profit before taxes (2017-2021)	-161 446	187 051	-348 497**	-1.97
Growth of the number of employees (2017-2021)	3.95	0.78	3.17*	1.82

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

For the start-ups supported by KIC, we concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls' were significant for their investments (total assets difference 459,993 – at 1% significance level), employment (3.17 – at 10% significance level) and their profitability (-348,497 – at 5% significance level) this latter in a negative way. We didn't find significant difference for their revenues (105,282), at least in this short run.

This is much in line with the literature, see for example Nyikos et al (Nyikos Györgyi, Laposa Tamás, Béres Attila - Micro-economic effects of public funds on enterprises in Hungary REGIONAL STUDIES REGIONAL SCIENCE (2168-1376): 7 1 pp 346-361 (2020)). The assisted companies are usually able to increase their inputs (capital and labour) but not much or their sales and profitability. Here we even found that the profitability of the supported enterprises was significantly lower than the controls. This exercise however should be done also at a later stage because the increase in the revenues and profitability may occur years after the additional investments.

Results of the survival analysis

We conducted a binary (logit) regression on the survival of the start-ups and their relation to different variables, especially being supported by the KIC. The results of the regression were the followings:

Pseudo R² = 0.1382

Variable	Coefficient	P> z
KIC support	-1.22***	0.000

Sector – Agriculture, Forestry, And Fishing	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Mining, Construction	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Manufacturing 1	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Manufacturing 2	-0.506	0.468
Sector – Transportation, Communications, Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Wholesale & Retail Trade	-0.52	0.163
Sector – Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	-1.59***	0.009
Sector – Services	-0.707**	0.014
Age of the enterprise (years)	0.065	0.188
Total assets (2016)	6.56e-06	0.194
Net sales (2016)	2.24e-07	0.727
Profit before taxes (2016)	-1.94e-06	0.599
Number of employees (2016)	0.035	0.616
Constant	2.177***	0.000

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

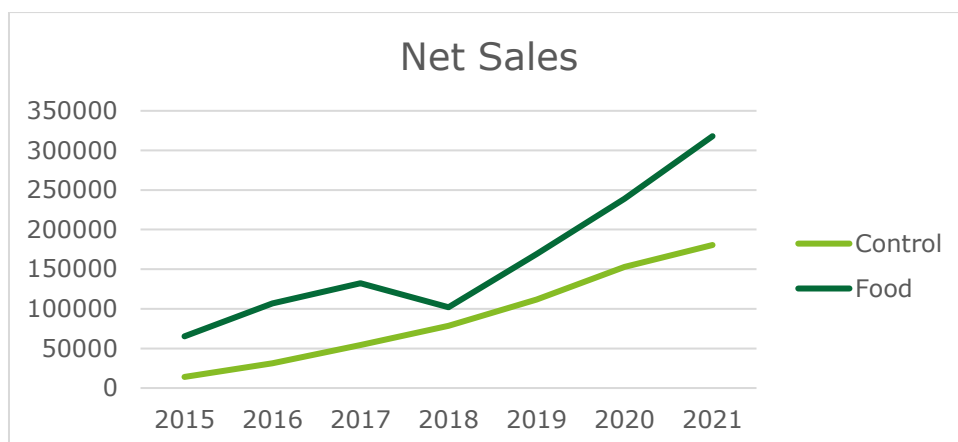
* 10% significance level

We found that the KIC supported start-ups tend to have a lower survival rate than the controls. Also, some sectors have higher mortality rates, like finance and services.

Contribution to revenue growth of organisations trading or employing innovations developed with the KIC support.

For the start-ups supported by KIC, we concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls' was not significant for their revenues and profitability, at least in this short run, but we

could observe that the supported start-ups could increase the amount of their net sales by approximately 85,000 Euros more than the companies of the control group.



Variable	Coefficient	P> z
Net sales (2016)	-2.22 e-07	0.945

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of net sales (2017-2021)	162 564	57 281	105 282	1.02

Number and revenue of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KICs trading 3 years after KIC support ceased.

Survival analysis

We conducted a binary (logit) regression on the survival of the start-ups and their relation to different variables, especially being supported by the KIC. The results of the regression were the followings:

Pseudo R2 = 0.1382

Variable	Coefficient	P> z
KIC support	-1.22***	0.000
Sector – Agriculture, Forestry, And Fishing	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Mining, Construction	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Manufacturing 1	n.a.	n.a.

Sector – Manufacturing 2	-0.506	0.468
Sector – Transportation, Communications, Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	n.a.	n.a.
Sector – Wholesale & Retail Trade	-0.52	0.163
Sector – Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	-1.59***	0.009
Sector – Services	-0.707**	0.014
Age of the enterprise (years)	0.065	0.188
Total assets (2016)	6.56e-06	0.194
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Profit before taxes (2016)	-1.94e-06	0.599
Number of employees (2016)	0.035	0.616
Constant	2.177***	0.000

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

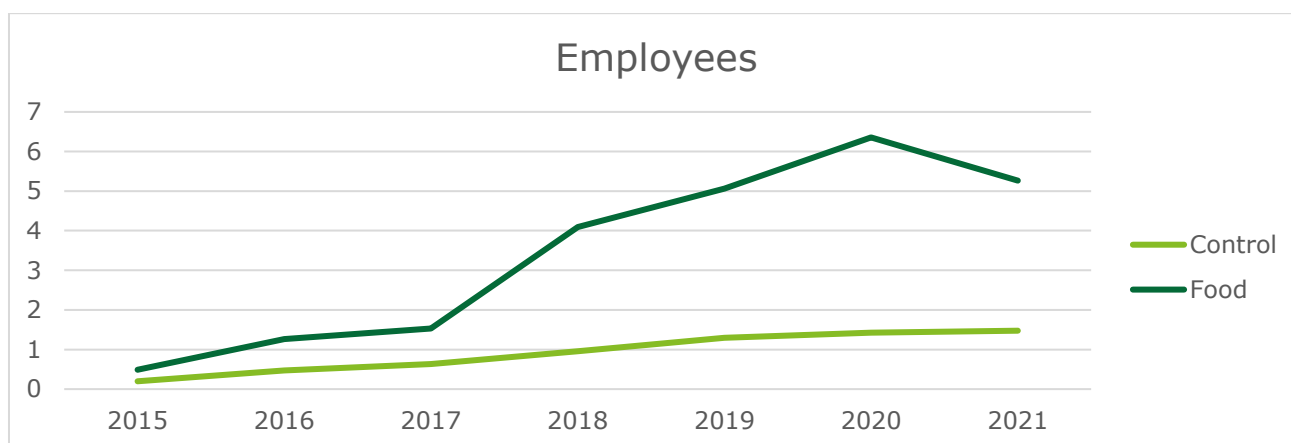
We found that the KIC supported start-ups tend to have a lower survival rate than the controls. Also, some sectors have higher mortality rates, like finance and services.

	Food #	Food %	Control #	Control %
Active	38	84%	956	98%
Out of Business	7	16%	19	2%
SUM	45	100%	975	100%

The survival of the EIT-Food start-ups were significantly lower than the control enterprises. From the identified 45 start-ups, 38 is still active, which represents an 84% survival rate. While compared to the control group's 19, only 7 KIC supported start-ups ceased their operation, however the population of the control group was more than 20 times larger, which resulted in a 98% survival rate.

New jobs created in start-ups / scale-ups

For the start-ups supported by KIC, we concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls' (3.17) were significant for their number of employees (10% significance level). Based on the available data we can conclude that supported start-ups are creating a higher number of jobs than the control group. Supported businesses could increase the number of their employees faster than businesses in the control group, creating a significant difference of 4.93 employees in 2020.



Variable	Coefficient	P> z
Number of employees (2016)	0.008	0.796

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of the number of employees (2017-2021)	3.95	0.78	3.17*	1.82

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

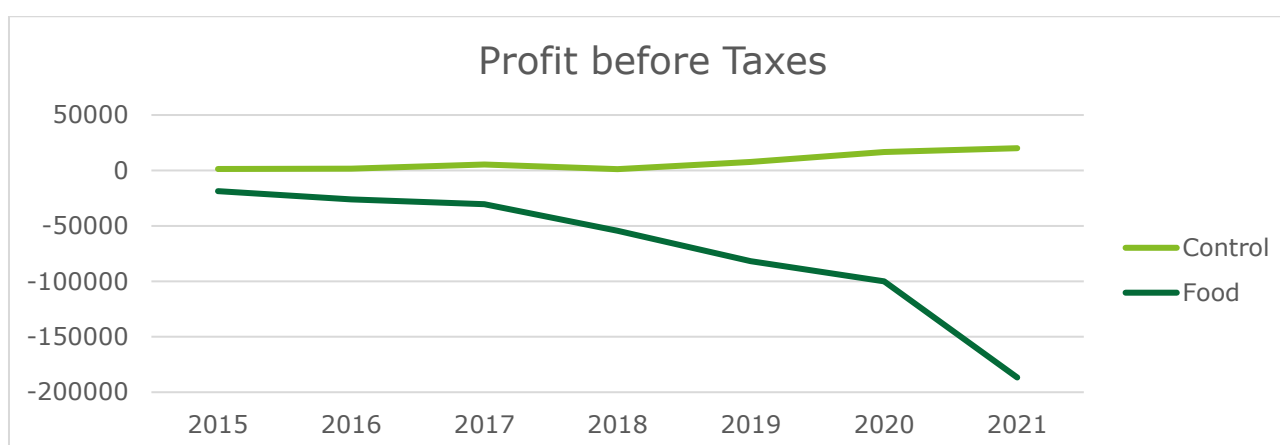
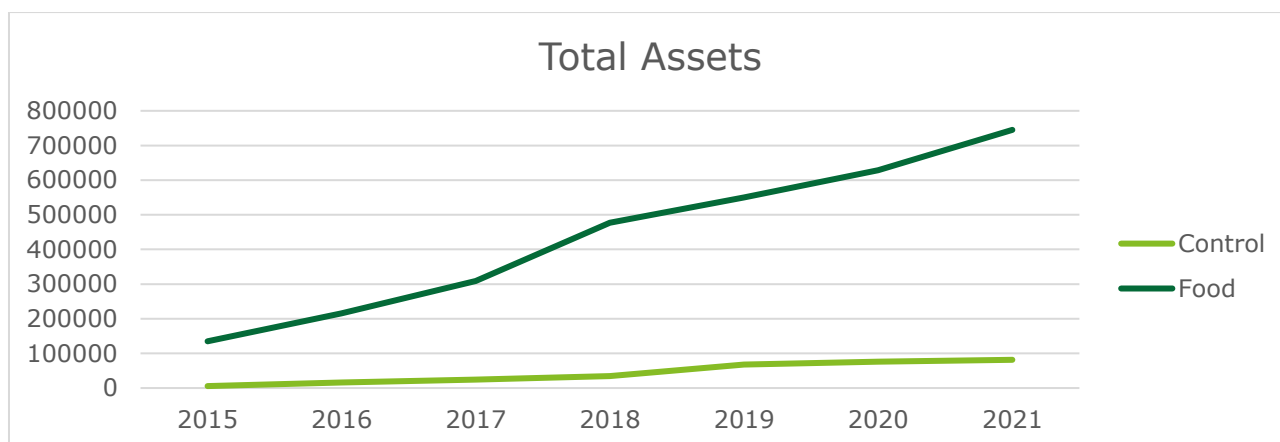
KIC's capacity to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems and the achieved level of financial sustainability

For the start-ups supported by KIC, we concluded that the growth difference between their indicator values and the controls' were significant for their investments (total assets – at 1% significance level), and their profitability (5% significance level) the latter in a negative way.

Based on the available data we can conclude that growth in assets is significantly higher in supported start-ups than in the control group, reaching 745,015 Euros in 2021 compared to the 81,460 Euros of the control group in the same year.

However, it raises serious concerns from a financial sustainability point of view that supported start-ups seem to be heavily loss-making reaching a very low value of -186,715 Euros, while the control group's profit before taxes is increasing consistently in time by almost 20,000 Euros over the analysed period. The

consistent decrease of profits before taxes at KIC supported enterprises took an even steeper decline in 2021, when in this one year, their profits dropped more, than it did in the previous years combined.



Variable	Coefficient	P> z
Total assets (2016)	6.07 e-07**	0.014
Profit before taxes (2016)	-3.42 e-07	0.715

Variable	Treated	Controls	Difference	T-stat
Growth of total assets (2017-2021)	388 549	71 444	459 993***	2.58
Growth of profit before taxes (2017-2021)	-161 446	187 051	-348 497**	-1.97

*** 1% significance level

** 5% significance level

* 10% significance level

14.4. ANNEX IV. Reference list

REGULATION (EC) No 294/2008 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2008 establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

REGULATION (EU) No 1292/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 294/2008 establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

REGULATION (EU) 2021/819 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

DECISION 34/2017 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT) on the adoption of the final single programming document (2018-2020) of the EIT, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

DECISION 06/2019 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT) on the amendment of decision 42/2018 of the EIT governing board on the adoption of the final single programming document (2019-2021) of the EIT, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

DECISION 27/2019 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT) on the adoption of the final single programming document (2020-2022) of the EIT, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

DECISION 17/2015 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT) on adopting the triennial work programme (TWP) 2016-2018, received from EIT on 05.12.2022

DECISION 4/2015 of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) on principles on KIC's financial sustainability, [EIT GB Decision on principles on KIC Financial Sustainability.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) accessed on 06.05.2023.

DECISION 13/2021 of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) on the principles of financial sustainability of knowledge and innovation communities (KICs), https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-13_20210317-gb66-13_new_eit_fs_principles.pdf, accessed on 08.02.2023.

GENERAL MODEL GRANT AGREEMENT/CONTRACT FOR THE HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME (HORIZON) 1 EURATOM RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAMME (EURATOM) 2 (HE MGA — MULTI & MONO), Annex 5, [general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#), accessed on 26.01.2023

DUNA Portal Grant Reporting and Business Planning modules (access granted by EIT)

E&Y, Equinox, Multicontact (2020) A 2014-2020-as KFI-támogatások értékelése (Evaluation of the 2014-2020 RDI support, in Hungarian with English executive summary), <https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/informacio/ertekelesek/szechenyi-2020-ertekelese/op-szint-rtkelsek/gazdasfejlesztsi-rtkelsek--1/a-2014-2020-as-kfi-tmogatsok-rtkelse>

Materials received from EIT Urban Mobility (KIC specific documents, Gender Mainstreaming Plan, Highlights Reports, RIS activity reports)

EIT and KICs websites (deliverables included on websites, as well as those submitted alongside KIC reports)

Documents provided by EIT:

- Key EIT documents (e.g., old EIT Regulation (2008), EIT Regulation Amendment (2013), new EIT Regulation (2021), EIT Financial Regulation, EIT SIA 2014-2020 and EIT SIA 2021-2027, Triennial Work Programmes, Single Programming Documents);

- Calls for KIC Proposals documentation; KIC Proposals;
- Framework Partnership Agreements, new Partnership Agreements and KICs' Strategic Agendas (originals and any later updates);
- KICs Business Plans and Reports for relevant years and experts' assessments;
- KIC Assessments: Business Creation, Education, Knowledge Triangle integration, and subsequent RIS evaluations;
- RIS Evaluation 2020;
- EIT consolidated reports on the KIC Monitoring/GB Rapporteur visits and reports;
- Specific EIT guidance to KICs (e.g. governance, code of conduct, etc.);
- EIT Principles on KICs' Financial Sustainability (old and new);
- EIT Guidance on the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) 2018-2020 and EIT RIS Implementation Framework 2021-2027;
- EIT Good Governance Principles and respective assessments;
- EIT and KICs websites (deliverables included in websites as well as those submitted with KIC reports);
- KICs' action plans for tackling specific issues (i.e. EIT and EU co-branding; communications strategy; Project Partners, gender balance etc.);
- Annual Grant KIC Performance Assessment Reports;
- Multi-annual Dashboard;
- Annual Grant KIC Performance Assessment Reports;
- EIT GB Strategic Recommendations issued during the assessed period;
- EIT GB Rapporteur Reports;
- Communications Activities Assessments;
- Publicly available relevant EU documents.